University of Alberta

Melancholic Poetics:
The Vagaries and Vicissitudes of Identity in Three Canadian Poetic Novels and Various Psychoanalytical Works.

by

Robert William Gray ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Melancholic Poetics: The Vagaries and Vicissitudes of Identity in Three Canadian Poetic Novels and Various Psychoanalytical Works submitted by Robert Gray in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my extraordinary and odd family,
for making me into a storyteller
and a fan of storytelling.

ABSTRACT

In our current cultural climate, melancholia is most likely to be medicated, considered unproductive and without purpose. Yet, in poetic novels such as Kristjana Gunnars's *Substance of Forgetting*, Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures*, and Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, it is essential to the subjects' ontological quest to express themselves and mediate the fraught border between their inner realities and the vagaries of the external world. For these three novelists, a melancholic perspective is a site of affirmation and resistance against dominant discourses that constrain and repress the subject's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and history.

This study adopts Jacques Lacan's triple dimension of reading, "practice (clinical event), concept (theory), and metaphor (literature)" (Felman, *Insight* 13) in order to bring literature and psychoanalysis (two constrained bedfellows with a bad history) into a conversation with one another. This tripartite structure to the chapters is intended to encourage dialectical readings and challenge the psychoanalytical texts' position as "presumed to know." The poetic fictions explored here give a voice to melancholia and speak against psychoanalysis's drive to explain and cure.

In search of solitude, in search of witness, in the quest to speak the unspeakable and silenced aspects of themselves, the subjects of these three poetic novels are overwhelmed by affect. The melancholic perspective in all its ambivalence and passion permits the subject to "unlatch" herself from social and cultural hegemonic discourses, to find herself in the margins.

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INTRODUCTION:

> Semiology, concerned as it is with the zero degree of symbolism, is unavoidably led to ponder over not only the amatory state but its corollary as well, melancholia; at the same time it observes that if there is no writing other than the amorous, there is no imagination that is not, overtly or secretly, melancholy. (6)
>
> *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*
>
> Julia Kristeva

> She can feel it inside her, an all but indescribable second self, or rather a parallel, purer self. If she were religious, she would call it the soul. It is more than the sum of her intellect and her emotions, more than the sum of her experiences, though it runs like veins of brilliant metal through all three. It is an inner faculty that recognizes the animating mysteries of the world because it is made of the same substance, and when she is very fortunate she is able to write directly through that faculty. (35)
>
> *The Hours*
>
> Michael Cunningham

In Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, he imagines the inner life of Virginia Woolf on the day she began her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. The epigraph above, then, is a writer imagining a writer's perfect and sometimes elusive, inspired mode of concentration. In *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry*, Jane Hirshfield explores and maps out a similar mode of concentration she sees as a prevalent part of poetry. She describes the three "directions" it takes: first it "*direct[s] toward a common center*. This form of concentration pulls a poem together, making of its disparate parts a single event"; secondly it directs the reader "*to focus one's attention*; this aspect of concentration faces outward"; and lastly, this mode of concentration directs the reader "*to increase in strength or density*, as in concentrating a salt solution" (6). As idealistic as this balance is, it has a lot in common with the melancholic's passionate and intense attempts to reconcile his or her unconscious work with the external world, as in the inspired state Cunningham imagines for Virginia Woolf.

I am making this correlation to introduce the creative and functional aspect of melancholia, in resistance to the prevalent characterizations of it as exclusively an illness and a disorder without use. There is a long, though recently neglected, tradition that characterizes melancholia as a crucial and insightful perspective on the world, as Julia Kristeva points out in *Black Sun*. There, she traces constructions of melancholia from Aristotle, who characterizes it as "an exceptional personality . . . [and] breaks new ground by removing melancholia from pathology and locating it in nature . . . The melancholia he evokes is not a philosopher's disease but his very nature, his *ethos*"(7). Recognizing it as a mode of concentration and a perspective on the world, even Freud argues that the melancholic, "has a keener eye for the truth . . . [and] we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind" (255).

Carrying this train of thought a little further, best selling author Susanna Kaysen argues that, "if the price of being happier is an occluded worldview, I don't want to pay it. I'd rather see things clearly. Seeing things clearly, for me, is a sort of happiness, even if what I see is banal or sad" ("One Cheer" 40). Truth, clarity, and a philosophical perspective are congruent with melancholia and its relationship to the world. For the individual, melancholia can structure a relationship with or distance from the world and provide a better understanding of what part he or she plays.

Furthermore, for writers like the American ex-patriot Edmund White (now living in Paris), melancholia is more than a perspective or a mode of concentration; it is a pleasure:

> I should make it clear right away – for me melancholy is good. It's not the same thing as sad, which is a bit wimpish, or grieving, which is realistic and transitory, or depressed, which is a condition curable by pills. No, melancholy is a mood, as cool and gusting as autumn rain, as rich and full as a solitary train ride away from a lover, as beautiful as a very young couple sleeping in a public place. It is a mood that rules supreme in Istanbul, especially in the Ottoman graveyards sloping down to the Golden Horn or in late-nineteenth-century mosques. It is also a mood that in a softer, subtler version hangs over much of the heart of Paris. (103)

These other aspects of melancholy (as an adjective) that White describes, these pleasurable aspects accompany what Freud, Kristeva, Kaysen, and others have argued about melancholia's mode of concentration and perspective on the world – that pleasure and perspective can be one and the same.

Kaysen's desire for her own melancholy happiness and White's argument that "melancholy is good" should not be mistaken for the more opaque tradition of the tortured artist, or as Kay Redfield Jamison describes it in *Touched with Fire*, "a troubling or unlikely association that conjures up simplistic notions of the 'mad genius,' bringing with it images of mindless and unaesthetic reductionism" (3). Critics like George Pickering unfortunately argue that the crippling and often disastrous variety of illnesses which affected great minds like Virginia Woolf "might occasionally be an asset and not an unmitigated disaster" (7).[1] Kaysen and White are not romanticizing the relationship between madness and the artist, but are complicating the relationship, attempting some middle ground between demonization and romanticization. As they emphasize, that middle ground is a complicated place where happiness is not simply the absence of sadness, and pleasure is found in the range of affective experiences that define us.

White also interestingly moves us from the description of moments that are melancholy to whole cities that share that same mood. He reminds us that the individual unmistakably lives not only in the temporal and geographical moment, but also lives in a particular historical and social context, which in North America at the turn of this past century might as well be deemed the Age of Prozac. Why Kaysen and White write in support and defense of melancholia (and that which is melancholy) is that they are aware of the current climate. The rise of pharmacology has firmly located us in a fearful relation to melancholia. Michael Vincent Miller, in his introduction to Jacques Hassoun's *The Cruelty of Depression: On Melancholy*, argues that,

> The restoration of well-being now seems to require little more than swallowing so many micrograms per day. . . We end up with a narrow view of depression, which leaves out its mystery and metaphysical horror

---

[1] Pickering uses his own osteo-arthritic hips to point out how illness allows him to stay home, be the centre of people's concern, and affords him time to be creative. His attempt to find an analogous relationship between his own hips and the serious mental illnesses of the historical subjects he looks at is a bit trite and banal, considering he is a Professor of Medicine and seeks to support an argument of some seriousness.

> – the terrible waste but also the sometimes astounding creativity that can emerge from this dark cave in the human condition. (viii)

The usefulness, the insight, the truth writers and philosophers see through melancholia might just as easily be medicated away under the current social and cultural climate. Miller further argues that "we have passed from a romanticization of certain illnesses -- tuberculosis and neurasthenia were two late nineteenth-century fellow travelers alongside melancholia -- to a romance of cure"(x). Self-reflection and metaphysical questions, in this day and age, are too risky as ventures.

Certainly, this is in some manner cultural, as Kaysen suggests: "Most people would rather be part of the optimist group than the pessimist group, at least in modern America, where optimism is highly valued and irony, pessimism, and sadness are seen as 'negative thinking.' Americans are saddled with the idea that we can and should be happy"(40-41). In that sense, Kaysen's own article is radical as it attends to the very real prejudice against melancholia – it does not typically measure up to the Protestant work ethic. She argues, counter to the typical characterization of it as unproductive, that melancholia is a truthful perspective and as such is in and of itself useful:

> I think melancholy is useful. In its aspect of pensive reflection or contemplation, it's the source of many books (even those complaining about it) and paintings, much scientific insight, the resolution of many fights between couples and friends, and the process known as becoming mature. (38-39)

Kaysen's essay seeks to regard melancholia from a different perspective, still using the prevailing framework of work and usefulness, though attempting to revise the stigmatization of the affect. The title of the essay and the reversals in which she privileges melancholia over happiness almost seem satirical, but this is only one tactic in her arsenal, and the essay recognizes the "serious drawbacks" of the illness and the fact that "it's a foretaste of death. It's a trip to the country of nothingness" (43). But Kaysen's point is a glass-half-full understanding of melancholy, a positive view of what is considered a negative state.[2]

At yet another macro level are the arguments that we are in an era of depression, that this moment in history is characterized as such. In *New Maladies of the Soul*, Kristeva argues for new patients, based on historical developments:

> These days, who still has a soul? We are all too familiar with the sort of emotional blackmail that reminds us of television serials, but this coercion is merely a by-product of the hysterical failure of psychic life that romantic dissatisfaction and middle-class domestic comedy have already depicted for us. . . . Held back by his aloofness, modern man is a narcissist – a narcissist who may suffer, but who feels no remorse. . . . When he is not depressed, he becomes swept away by insignificant and valueless objects that offer a perverse pleasure, but no satisfaction. (7)

Similarly, Miller asks "[h]as the Age of Anxiety, as W. H. Auden named the period following World War II, now been succeeded by the Age of Depression? Certainly there are ample signs in our culture, from best-selling memoirs by depressed authors . . . to the booming business in antidepressant drugs . . . Depression has overtaken anxiety as our presiding discontent" (vii). Andrew Soloman similarly argues in *The Noonday Demon* that "[t]he climbing rates of depression are without question the consequence of modernity" (31). The Age of Depression presides over our cultural discontent, over our individual disillusionment and nameless longing. So, in our explorations, the Age and the culture will preside in the background as unquantifiable yet very real influences over the private and public worlds explored by these fictional and theoretical works.

---

[2] Hers is perhaps an American optimism in the end no matter how it tries to resist cultural constructions. Even Kaysen's satirical edge cannot escape cultural notions of depression read through the framework of productivity.

It would seem, then, that this is a ripe place in history, the questions posed by melancholia existing on the historical, cultural, and personal levels, like similar Russian dolls one inside the other. This age sees with the melancholic's ambivalence, looking one way towards hope while looking simultaneously towards despair. The sorts of concentration, meditation and perspective that make melancholia a philosophical sort of knowledge prevail, and the false cultural question posed in articles like Kaysen's seems to be to medicate or suffer. Such false binaries are meant to obscure the various choices and alternatives, the possibilities that come from such a questioning. If this is the age of melancholia, it does not take a monstrous leap of the imagination to wonder if this is the end point of anxiety and a necessary state of possibility.

* * *

It becomes quickly evident in reading books like John Bentley May's *In the Jaws of the Black Dogs* and Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon*, that the mode of concentration that I wish to focus on here has something and nothing in common with "clinical" depression, or the affliction in its more intense states. Soloman, describing one of his bouts of depression, points out the severity of his affliction:

> On the way home from the store, I suddenly lost control of my lower intestine and soiled myself. I could feel the stain spreading as I hastened

> home . . . I did not sleep much that night, and I could not get up the following day. I knew I could not go to any restaurant. I wanted to call my friends and cancel, but I couldn't. I lay very still and thought about speaking, trying to figure out how to do it. I moved my tongue but there were no sounds, I had forgotten how to talk . . . There is a moment, if you trip or slip, before your hand shoots out to break your fall when you feel the earth rushing up at you and you cannot help yourself, a passing, fraction-of-a-second terror. I felt that way hour after hour after hour. (49-50)

For Mays, paranoia, psycho-somatic deafness and extreme fantasies of suicide and self-mutilation ruled:

> When the other enemies did not come at night, I was left with the only enemy who never left me – and my thoughts would then turn to slashing myself, hacking open my filthy bowels and letting the bloody feces flow into the sheets until the bleeding and the flowing stopped, leaving me dead, quiet at last, peacefully asleep, no longer fearful. The desire for self-slaughter burned in me most intensely when I masturbated with no fantasy save that of plunging the knife into my abdomen, destroying phallus and mind and body and gut at the same time, ending memory and mind and life in one obscene spill and absence. (52)

These are not just gloomy Sundays or philosophical frames of mind; they are clinically depressed states that incapacitated Solomon's and Mays's lives. To not attend to some distinction from the outset would be to erroneously neglect the very real and very serious conditions the clinically depressed face.

The difficulty in distinguishing between the sort of melancholic imaginary I am primarily focusing on in this dissertation and the more clinically depressed states that Solomon and Mays describe is that it seems to be little more than a difference in intensity. Soloman is an award-winning novelist and Mays a visual arts and architecture critic who has won both newspaper and magazine awards. Who can say what brings artists to a state of melancholic creativity where they are inspired to create a work of art, and what pushes them to an incapacitating state where even medication is unable to help? Personal history, social and cultural context must all play a part in the development of a depressed episode, and yet there is no way to quantify or fathom what constitutes an exciting cause, what defines the subject's move from inspiration to incapacitating depression.

What Soloman and Mays describe in some places resembles the most extreme of the three novels I will discuss here, Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures*, but even that similarity is problematic. It must be asserted that with the three primary texts this dissertation will be dealing with are works of art. As Kristeva notes in *Time & Sense*, "unless a writer falls into psychosis, he does not forget that experience owes its intensity to signs (music, poetry, painting) that must be manipulated by technique or artifice in order to attain a metamorphosis of all the senses, that is, the simultaneity with Being, with the other, with the beloved" (195). As real as the writer's personal experience might be, in order to convey it the writer must in some sense understand the importance of representation, the use of signs and artifice to communicate his or her affective state and find witness or communion with the other. In her essay, "On the Melancholic Imaginary," Kristeva carries this awareness a step further and argues that the work of art, being more than a mode of communication, also operates on another level:

> Certainly, melancholy in writing has little to do with the clinical stupor of melancholia (even if the two carry the same name in French). Beyond the terminological confusion up to now maintained (what is melancholia? what is a depression?), we find ourselves here before an enigmatic chiasmus that will not cease to preoccupy us: if loss, mourning, absence set the imaginary act in motion and permanently fuel it as much as they menace and undermine it, it is also undeniable that the fetish of the work of art is erected in disavowal of this mobilizing affliction. (105)

Though it is important to make the distinction between a work of fiction and a case study – and though in Freud's case this sometimes feels like semantics – the three poetic fictions this dissertation focuses on also share an intimate connection to the afflictions they represent. Perhaps they disavow the affliction or perhaps they seek to understand it through representation. Regardless, as the focus of this dissertation is on written works, its critical stance is not the same as that of an analyst and I am not strictly dealing with case studies. The very work of art itself seems to be evidence that the artist was able in some manner to escape the jaws of a more terrible illness. The relationship between writer and text is never clearly symptomatic, yet as several of the critics and theorists I will discuss point out, the writing is not written in a vacuum devoid of the writer's experience either – I will proceed with a contradictory and ambivalent approach which assumes that the line between experience and writing can never be confidently established and that it is this uncertainty which is most significant.

* * *

At retreats and conferences, writers talk incessantly about their habits. Philip Roth notes that when writers ask each other about each other's process, "they're actually trying to find out 'Is he as crazy as I am?'"(Plimpton 67) They discuss where they write, how they write, what inspires them. Principally this dissertation brings psychoanalysis and literature together to have just such a neurotic conversation, but specifically about the relationship between melancholia and writing. As a writer and an academic, what I (and this project) must contend with, from the start, are the risks involved in just such a conversation. I first began to reflect on the dangers of interpretation during the comprehensive exams that were to inform this work. When my external reader, a well-respected poet, arrived without having read my actual exam papers, and proceeded to discuss at length his frustration with psychoanalysis, I began to understand a literary sort of fear – a fear of interpretation (as he performed it and I consequently experience it). What Shoshanna Felman refers to as "the madness of interpretation," I realized, was not just a potential critical mishap, but a violence that could be done to a writer, one which my external reader anticipated so strongly that he refused to be a reader -- a peculiar madness, to be sure, but illustrative nonetheless.

My external reader's fear pointed out to me that there might be a feared reader for a writer, one who might either misread the text or, even worse, see the truth. Similarly, in Smaro Kamboureli's autobiographical narrative *in the second person*, she notes that Robert Kroetsch is fearful of Freudian implications:

> Robert is working on an episode that is too Freudian for him. Well I had to listen to that all morning. He didn't very much appreciate my laughing. He makes up a story and then he rejects it because of its Freudian implications. "I don't believe in Freud," he kept shouting while making coffee. (65)

In Kamboureli's autobiography, Kroetsch struggles with interpretations he fears, rejecting a story because he doesn't "believe in Freud," when it really seems he might be fearful that Freud will believe in him.

Yet Kamboureli draws an important, if not parallel, point when she discusses the scene Kroetsch is struggling with:

> Dorf meets his sister at the airport. She reminds him of his childhood. Certain (cliché, if I might say so) experiences are, what's the right word, Freudian.
>
> There is a lot of unlearning to be done. (65)

What has to be unlearned is highly ambiguous here. It might be the very meaning of the adjective "Freudian," it might be Kroetsch's rejection and lack of faith in Freud (unlikely), or it might be the conflict it raises between Kroetsch and Kamboureli over the coffee being made and her lack of sympathy. At the very least, Kamboureli's literary deconstruction of ethnicity and autobiography trouble "implications" and interpretation. "Freudian" interpretations operate here as too reductive, too revealing or too clichéd.

This popular mythology of a "traditional" or "Freudian" psychoanalytic reading is certainly not without grounds. As Kay Redfield Jamison argues, "Excesses of psychoanalytic speculation, along with other abuses of psychobiography, have invited well-deserved ridicule" (3). Freud's approach to literary texts such as Schreber's memoirs and Leonardo Da Vinci's scientific notebooks was very reductive, and curiously out of step with his own theoretical ideas. This sort of psychoanalytic reading, Felman argues, is traditionally understood to be

> a relation in which literature is submitted to the authority, to the prestige of psychoanalysis. While literature is considered as a body of language -- to be interpreted -- psychoanalysis is considered as a body of knowledge, whose competence is called upon to interpret. Psychoanalysis, in other words, occupies the place of a subject, literature that of an object. (*Literature* 5)

This subordination to interpretation, as both Kroetsch's and my external reader's fear can attest, can be quite maddening. If my external reader had read my exams, and not misread me by default, he might have found that the methodology which I wish to define this work seeks to question the very reading he feared.

In order to overcome this subject / object relation between psychoanalysis and literature, Felman suggests putting "the topic in motion" through a reconfiguration of the notion of "application" into "implication":

> The notion of *application* would be replaced by the radically different notion of *implication*: bringing analytical questions to bear upon literary questions, *involving* psychoanalysis in the scene of literary analysis, the interpreter's role would here be, not to *apply* to the text an acquired science, a preconceived knowledge, but to act as a go-between, to

> *generate implications* between literature and psychoanalysis -- to explore, bring to light and articulate the various (indirect) ways in which the two domains do indeed *implicate each other*, each one finding itself enlightened, informed, but also affected, displaced by the other. (*Literature* 8-9)

This implication seeks to overthrow the subject / object binary set up between psychoanalysis and literature, to deconstruct the binary division between them.

Within such a dialectical reading, literature offers an important counter-transference. If literature is permitted to read psychoanalysis in the sort of "turn" which Felman describes, if critics become sensitive to the ways psychoanalysis tries to explain literature, they can learn something about psychoanalysis's own madness:

> This rhetorical theory looks specifically for the *uncanny moment in the theory*: it uses logic and instruments of logic in the aim of finding the aporetic moment at which logic itself falters. It uses concepts in a paradoxical attempt to point out precisely what conceptualization cannot integrate, the residue of its own operation, its point of articulation with what it (necessarily) leaves out. And it is this uncanny moment – which the theory uncovers yet by which the theory itself is placed in check – it is this moment that subverts, in rigor, its own rigor, this vanishing point of understanding, which, in this rhetorical conception, is felt to be the most forceful, the most probing and most fundamental to the very nature of the *rhetorical act* as it generates the specificity of the thing called literature. (*Madness* 27)

Felman theorizes here the complex repercussions of what is in some senses a simple turn: she proposes to read rhetorically and dialectically, turning the reading relationship around so literature can read psychoanalysis. This uncanny moment, essentially, is the site of the concept's unconscious, what it cannot say or what it represses in order to know what it knows.

My intention is to avoid bringing together psychoanalytic texts and works of fiction only to place psychoanalysis in the position of authority it too easily affords itself. I intend to resist what Shoshanna Felman refers to as,

> the crowning aberration which psychoanalysis sometimes unwittingly commits in its mêlées with literature. In trying to "explain" and *master* literature, in refusing, that is, to become a *dupe* of literature, in killing within literature that which makes it literature--its reserve of silence, that which, within speech, is incapable of speaking, the literary silence of a discourse *ignorant of what it knows* -- the psychoanalytic reading, ironically enough, turns out to be a reading which *represses the unconscious*, which represses, paradoxically, the unconscious which it purports to be "explaining." To *master*, then, (to become the Master) is, here as elsewhere, to *refuse to read* the letters. (*Literature* 193)

In the context of the story she's analyzing, this type of reductive reading is deemed 'vulgar.' The vulgar, therefore, is anything which misses, or falls short of, the dimension of the symbolic, anything which rules out, or excludes, meaning as a loss and as a flight -- anything which strives, in other words, to eliminate from language its inherent silence, anything which misses the specific way in which a text actively 'won't tell'(*Literature*

107). This must be the antithesis to what Méira Cook's narrator means in *Blood Girls* by the "gentle reader." To read the text on its own terms, gently, though this means to risk being duped, to experience the melancholic's own fraught and troubled relationship with language.

The reductive reading, the manic interpretation, like the melancholic's attempts to flatten language, heralds a sort of return of the real. Felman, in *Writing and Madness*, argues that the subject is itself a fiction, and that "whenever it 'explains' literature, particularly when it locates *madness* in literature, psychoanalysis is in danger of revealing nothing more than its own madness: the madness of the interpreter" (30).[3] The real answers back by revealing the analyst's own madness of interpretation.

To be sure, melancholia is not the most agreeable analysand, but, as Fink argues, "Lacan goes so far as to say that the only resistance in analysis is the analyst's resistance, for the patient's resistance to knowing can be surmounted if the analyst is willing to intervene" (8).[4] His attention to Saussurian semiotics draws attention to how desire operates in language and how language operates in transference / countertransference and in the analyst / analysand relationship in general.

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[3] Her intent here is to produce "a theory of the reading effect as a transference effect. It is a theory of reading centered on a rhetorical analysis and a theoretical examination of occurrences of transference in both the text and its critical readings" (30). Her practice of bringing psychoanalysis, rhetoric, and what she calls James's *Turn of the Screw*'s "own remarkable rhetorical *performance*" (30) is in part what my own practice is trying to accomplish in the chapters that follow. It is a practice that implicates the author, the text, the reader, the critic, and the analyst for it takes as its subject the repressed and the desired of each.

[4] Fink's argument takes Lacan's theories into a clinical setting. Jacques Lacan's theories as expressed in his enigmatic and frustrating *Écrits*, and in his playful seminar, altered psychoanalysis by changing its focus from the ego, and the subject as a discrete phenomenon, to language. Jane Gallop argues that, "Psychoanalysis, post-Lacan, is the science not of the psyche (object of the Humanities) but, as Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe put it, of the letter" (24).

The melancholic has fallen out of sorts with the Symbolic. The challenge falls to the analyst to understand the melancholic's stumblings and her hopeful despair. As Kristeva points out,

> they utter sentences that are interrupted, exhausted, come to a standstill. Even phrases they cannot formulate. A repetitive rhythm, a monotonous melody emerge and dominate the broken logical sequences, changing them into recurring, obsessive litanies. Finally, when that frugal musicality becomes exhausted in its turn, or simply does not succeed in becoming established on account of the pressure of the silence, the melancholy person appears to stop cognizing as well as uttering, sinking into the blankness of asymbolia or the excess of an unorderable cognitive chaos. (33)

The three primary texts this dissertation focuses on are works of poetic fiction that stylistically and structurally resemble what Kristeva describes above. The challenge that falls to the reader then is to attend to the chaos and the silences as he or she finds them and to read the melancholic's discourse through melancholia. To be more specific, the challenge is to read melancholia not with the intent to put words in the melancholic's mouth, not to allow our own unselfconscious transference to interfere, but to read the text while being open to possibility. To allow the text to witness itself, instead of the reader's transference – that is the goal.

I must also distinguish between the melancholic's speech and the melancholic's writing, for though his relationship to each is similar, he is unable to deny the mediation of the text, the constituency of what must seem an agency outside of himself. The text created “around the ‘black mark’ or ‘black sun’ of melancholy, as I have already discussed, is also depression’s antidote, a provisional well-being “(Kristeva, *Black Sun* 114). Textual creation, for Kristeva, marks both a disavowal of the affliction and the desire for an antidote. [5]

The real trouble here is the legacy of diagnosis which, at all times, is burdened with soci-cultural signification where melancholia is paired with mania, privileging mania’s triumph and its productive sociality over melancholia’s introverted “solipsism.” Klein’s good and bad objects follow this legacy and Kristeva’s formulation of the work of art as disavowal or antibody follows this too. Kristeva seems full of a faith that the melancholic does not possess, which is curious since she has been channeling the melancholic’s voice in the opening paragraphs of her analysis. The binary of “affliction” and “cure” handled clumsily only attempts to repress the affect that must be expressed. If the reader too easily regards the poetic fictions in this dissertation as banners raised to proclaim the subject’s triumph, he or she too participates in a neglect and cruelty that will lead to a manic vagary. Kristeva takes us to the moment of the “triumph,” but she leaves the story there, instead of focusing on the failure of the attempt and the drama that develops from such rising and falling. As Hassoun argues,

> Writing, rather than producing a solace, actually fosters the enigma of an unfathomable cruelty, similar to the one melancholics inflict upon themselves, having been forever confronted with a loss whose profile they can’t trace. Isn’t this, after all, what prompts the melancholic poet to say:

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[5] Kristeva’s reference to the antidote becomes very telling here, as the textual work operates like an antibody, a poison that is both inside and outside, personal and yet a public document, a personal storytelling that has a public life or signification. Kristeva doesn’t carry the theorizing this far, to recognize in the disavowal and the antibody the seeds of melancholia’s reincarnation.

I am the wound and the knife! . . .
Victim and hangman alike. (101)

The poet here is Baudelaire, and there is perhaps no better analogy for the mobius strip of writing and the melancholic subject's vicissitude than this subject as knife and wound.

The answer, it would seem, would be to adopt nineteenth-century methods for dealing with hysterics and have the melancholic refrain from writing and reading so as to protect her nerves. This "enigma of an unfathomable cruelty," though, must have some function other than masochism. It might be better understood as the subject's circling of the Real, the melancholic's fascination with the unutterable, and the text as the failed attempt to speak what it is that preoccupies him or her. The cruelty that Hassoun describes, then, in the clinical situation might be read as a moment of possibility:

> Yet anxiety also may contribute – quite precisely, in this instance – to creating a work of art, a piece of writing, music that will express the recoil in which the melancholic has shut himself, in which his partial drives, far from following out their winding course, clamp down upon themselves. If ever there's a time of resistance, a manifestation of life in the melancholic's petrified world, it comes when anxiety reveals itself as capable of creating a desire-causing object." (86)

That the melancholic is capable of creating an object, however flawed it is, marks an important opportunity for the writer as subject "to allow [him] to pry [himself] out of [his] decrepitude and to recognize that an Other exists"(87). Anxiety can be both destructively crippling and the way out – it is a threshold.

This anxious moment, the melancholic's foray into language and search for a desire-causing object, marks for Hassoun a moment of potential in the drama that the analyst must be able to recognize:

> It is obvious that the analyst is called upon to be shifted, or more precisely, to shift the destination site of the analysand's speech. This is the minimal, necessary condition for introducing into the *failing*, or *falling short of* [*faute de*] that afflicts the melancholic analysand, a possible area for play and dialecticization, in other words, of loss. For the melancholic is tormented not by a loss, but by the lack of possibility for naming and designating this loss. (29)

There are moments in the melancholic's experiences that are disabling, immobilizing. These are the moments that most require an analyst's intervention, to bring the melancholic's experiences back into play. For sadness itself becomes an object for the melancholic, and as productive as it can be, why would she give up her pleasures so easily?

Thus, a dialectical, rhetorical reading strategy will be the central approach of this dissertation. Structurally – on the level of the chapter – this will be reflected in my adoption of Lacan's triple dimension of reading, "practice (clinical event), concept (theory), and metaphor (literature)" (Felman, *Lacan* 13). So, for example, in chapter two I will look at intersections between hysteria and melancholia and the importance of interpretation and transference through Freud's case study of Dora (clinical event), Lacan's "Speech in Transference," (theory), and Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures* (literature). Each chapter will have "Prefatory Notes" that will contextualize the three texts that will be part of the chapter's dialectical reading. Though I will make tangential reference to contextual works by these authors, for the most part I am seeking an isolating juxtaposition, a more subtle version of what Slavoj Zizek takes on in texts like *Looking Awry* where he juxtaposes Lacanian theory with popular culture, similarly looking for the uncanny moment in "normal." This tripartite structure to the chapters is intended to encourage dialectical readings and challenge the psychoanalytical texts' position as "presumed to know." As much as possible, I attempt to isolate the texts, thereby attempting to resist the centrifugal way texts make canny each other's uncanny moments.

Though critics like Bruce Fink and Dylan Evans have tried to "translate" Lacan to the clinical setting, to do so in some way always seems to literalize the figurative – a necessary violence perhaps. Lacan's work appears more often here than other theorists because, as Felman asserts, Lacan embodies

> a revolutionized interpretive stance and (though he never formulates it systematically) a revolutionary theory of reading: a theory of reading that opens up into a rereading of the world as well as into a rereading of psychoanalysis itself. (*Insight* 9)

This revolutionary reading, the sort of open question Lacan's work affords, is essential to any reading strategy in relation to melancholia. Yet Kristeva's *Black Sun* refers to him only in passing. Jacques Hassoun's more recent book, *The Cruelty of Depression*, refers to him a little more frequently, yet my theoretical approach here chooses to throw Lacan more often than not into the theoretical hot seat up against Kristeva, Hassoun, Freud and others as a troubling and questioning force, to keep the discussion open where possible.

Far from arguing that Lacan is the subject "presumed to know," my contention here is that he is the one "presumed to question."

Similarly, the three novels this dissertation brings to the reading are texts that challenge readers narratively, structurally, and on the level of syntax. This challenge makes them more than an apt match for psychoanalysis's attempts "to 'explain' and *master*" (*Literature* 193). All three chapters begin their discussions with the novel first and then move to discussions of a case study and a psychoanalytic theory, alternating as the chapter progresses. Successively, the chapters are loosely centred around Lacan's three clinical structures: neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. This does not assume these categories to be unquestionable and yet gives us the basic structures in which to explore melancholia's various faces as it intersects with other structures. In doing so, this dissertation will in some way tackle the difficulty of defining melancholia, which is both its own condition, and yet defines various states which can be symptomatic of other conditions. This should not imply that I have diagnosed the novels as "neurotic," "psychotic," or "perverse" or chosen them as representative of Lacan's clinical structures. On the contrary, all three novels are variously neurotic, though even that shall be questioned within the chapters. All of the primary texts were chosen for how they might operate in a dialogue with one another, how they might question the clinical structures they are helping to explore, and how they define different limits of the subject's experience with language and ontology.

Chapter One, as much as possible, seeks to build a foundation for our understanding of melancholia through looking at Kristjana Gunner's *The Substance of Forgetting*, Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," and Julia Kristeva's "The Experience of Time Embodied." This chapter primarily explores what defines neurosis and it seems a sensible place to begin since, as Dylan Evans points out, "[t]he normal structure, in the sense of that which is found in the statistical majority of the population, is neurosis" (123). It is useful to understand how melancholia figures for the majority of the population before exploring the more complicated psychotic and perverse varieties. The chapter juxtaposes the texts by Gunnars, Freud, and Kristeva in order to explore the neurotic melancholic's attempts to represent his or her reality through language (the mixed blessing of representation), and to establish a foundational exploration of the role time plays in the melancholic's experience, both in the tropes of remembering and forgetting. Fundamentally, this discussion permits us to see the melancholic experience as a mode of concentration essential to both the reading and writing process.

Chapter Two explores the defining limits between neurosis and psychosis through the figure of the hysteric. Through Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures*, Sigmund Freud's "Fragments of A Case of Hysteria ('Dora')", and Jacques Lacan's seminar[6] "Speech in the Transference" I will analyze transference between the reader and the text, and between the analyst and the analysand, bringing to the fore the fraught relationship between the melancholic hysteric and her audience. The first chapter focuses on the suspect witness the melancholic finds in writing, where Chapter Two raises the question of audience and the role of the world in inciting and exacerbating melancholia. What can the melancholic do when "reality testing" is not a guiding psychic device, but a destructive force? Futhermore, this chapter challenges the gendered constructions of hysteria and psychosis in Lacan's work, as Thomas's protagonist pushes the hysteric's question to its limits.

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[6] The twenty-seven annual series of lectures that Lacan gave are, as Dylan Evans points out, "usually referred to collectively as 'the seminar', in the singular" (176).

Chapter Three will take us to an exploration of neurosis in relation to perversion and the structures and devices that define the experiences of the perverse subject. There is plenty that is perverse in the neurotic's ontological quest, so one of our central questions will be what differentiates the perverse melancholic from the subject with a perverse structure. Through Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, Jacques Hassoun's case study on Janus, and Darian Leader's "The Depressive Position for Klein and Lacan," this chapter will explore the perverse subject's operation of disavowal and the desire for the Law of the Father. Through an exploration of the roles of anxiety and the Other in the perverse subject's search for the self, I will return to the question raised in this introduction: given what Hassoun calls the "unfathomable cruelty"(101) of writing, why does the writer return again and again?

Indeed, this work's assumption is an ambivalent and melancholic one. Jacques Hassoun points to what Thomas Mann declared, "on the occasion of Freud's eightieth birthday: 'Psychoanalysis is a form of melancholy knowledge'"(8). Mann's statement gives us a window to what the melancholic can afford us theoretically and as a mode of concentration. Similarly, Felman's reading strategy is in its essence melancholic: ambivalent and without faith in the traditional "superiority" of psychoanalysis. Indeed, the melancholic would assert from the beginning that the end of analysis, the end of interpretation, is in the beginning and that there is no end to analysis or interpretation. In a world where film industries are built on "resolution" and "happy endings" and in the face of what Miller calls the American way's "voracious optimism" (xxvii), this is a most radical reading.

These three chapters are each performances, small coliseums in which a work of fiction, a case study and a theory are made to interact and create a dialogue. In each case the melancholic experience is different, able to find resolution and inspiration, risking all and toppling the brink in another, and requiring a monstrous leap of the imagination in the last. In all three, there is the central quest for self-representation and the struggle to translate lived experience into language, while all three reflect on how language also constructs experience. Through these three dialectical performances, I seek to better perceive the vicissitudes and vagaries facing the melancholic as writer seeking her way in the world.

CHAPTER ONE: NEUROSIS AND MELANCHOLIA
IN KRISTJANA GUNNARS'S *THE SUBSTANCE OF FORGETTING*,
SIGMUND FREUD'S "MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA"
AND JULIA KRISTEVA'S
"THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME EMBODIED"

PREFATORY NOTES:

> Words that escape you rupture reality. They slice through the continuum of your existence and disappear. Your existence goes on. The words are gone. No one has overheard. But the cut the speaking made remains. (96-97)

The Substance of Forgetting

Kristjana Gunnars

> 'Neurotic, ha!' I let out a scornful laugh. 'If neurotic is wanting two mutually exclusive things at one and the same time, then I'm neurotic as hell. I'll be flying back and forth between one mutually exclusive thing and another for the rest of my days.' (99)

The Bell Jar

Sylvia Plath

It is easiest to understand neurosis when it faces a discourse that troubles it, when its mechanisms are at work. Bruce Fink, in his *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* points out that "[t]he fundamental mechanism that defines neurosis is repression" (113). For our purposes in this chapter, the mechanism of repression directs us to be concerned not only with the manifest appearance of things – for example, the visual excess of the Okanagan Valley in *The Substance of Forgetting* – but with what the texts at hand refuse to say, refuse to acknowledge – their own repressed desire.

According to Lacan, "[t]he structure of neurosis is essentially a question, and indeed this is why for a long time it was for us purely and simply a question" (*S3* 174). This question, in Lacan's work, follows on gendered lines, so that women neurotics are generally hysterics and the question they pose is, "What is it to be a woman?" (*S3* 175). It is, broadly drawn, the other significant mode of neurosis that men find themselves prone to, and the question there is the question of death, or seen slightly differently, the question of the signifier:

> The symbolic provides a form into which the subject is inserted at the level of his being. It's on the basis of the signifier that the subject recognizes himself as being this or that. The chain of signifiers has a fundamental explanatory value, and the very notion of causality is nothing else.
>
> There is nevertheless one thing that evades the symbolic tapestry, it's procreation in its essential root – that one being is born from another. In the symbolic order procreation is covered by the order instituted by this succession between beings. But nothing in the symbolic explains the fact of their individuation, the fact that beings come from beings. The entire symbolism declares that creatures don't engender creatures, that a creature is unthinkable without a fundamental creation. In the symbolic nothing explains creation. (*S3* 179)

The symbolic stands as a tautology, a form of knowledge that requires no chicken-versus-egg theories, and, indeed, represses any explanation for creation – in the symbolic, things just are what they are. On some level, then, the symbolic's stolid answer for everything demands the return of the repressed, the return of the question of creation and of death. Whereas the hysteric faces the symbolic with the question of how to symbolize her own sexual difference, the obsessive neurotic takes up what is repressed by the symbolic. It is Hamlet's question: "To be or not to be" and "it relates to the contingency of one's own existence" (*Dictionary* 123). Whether hysteric or obsessive, the neurotic's existence poses questions that the symbolic cannot answer. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan argues that the hysteric "reveals the incapacity of any human subject to satisfy the ideals of Symbolic identifications" (164), and this is also more generally true for neurosis. Indeed, to satisfy the needs of the symbolic is to foreclose on the neurotic question, to become psychotic.

The primary text I explore this terrain through and with is Kristjana Gunnars's *The Substance of Forgetting*, the amorous recollections of an unnamed narrator attempting to reconcile two landscapes, the one of her affair with a French-Canadian man, and the one where she has gone to forget and remember. I make *The Substance of Forgetting*, Kristjana Gunnars's third of her five novels so far, the primary focus of this chapter because it is the most excessive, and, I would argue, the most melancholic. Generally her work is melancholic, but in much of her works the exciting causes are almost too apparent and forthright: in *The Prowler*, the narrator's experience as immigrant, her struggles with ethnicity; in *Zero Hour*, the death of the narrator's father; in *The Rose Garden* the narrator's fish-out-of water experiences in Germany and her questioning of women's experience as readers; and in *Night Train to Nykøbing*, the overwhelming absence of the beloved. In *The Substance of Forgetting*, however, the only identifiable exciting cause is the romance, and yet the excessiveness of the narrative and the struggles with the landscape of the Okanagan all seem to supercede that ostensible exciting cause – in this novel, more distinguishably than the others, melancholia is the thing.

In a more general sense, I have chosen to bring Gunnars's work into this dissertation and particularly this chapter because of its relentless self-reflexivity and insistent passion. There are no shy moments. Nothing in her work avoids what Roland Barthes calls "the lover's discourse":

> This discourse is spoken, perhaps by thousands of subjects (who knows?), but warranted by no one; it is completely forsaken by the surrounding languages: ignored, disparaged, or derided by them, severed not only from authority but also from the mechanisms of authority (sciences, techniques, arts). (1)

Gunnars is concerned most with the disparaged discourses of our lives, the threshold places where affect and the limits of language meet. Also, as with the other two novels in this dissertation, Gunnars's works involve the reader in the process of their own creation, and, as such, they seem ripe and ready for the sort of dialectical readings these chapters undertake.[7]

Although Sigmund Freud has fallen out of favour with many current thinkers, the inclusion of his seminal paper "Mourning and Melancholia" is mandatory for this dissertation. The paper was inspired by Freud's work on the Oedipus complex, guilt, and the concept of an ego ideal. Primarily, though, as Angela Richards argues, "[t]he present paper may, indeed, be regarded as an extension of the one on narcissism which Freud had written a year earlier" (249). The paper was a culmination of several avenues of exploration Freud was engaged with and it had implications for where his work would go. Richards points out that, "the implications of this paper . . . did not become immediately obvious" (249). The paper led, in the larger scheme of Freud's work, "to the hypothesis of the super-ego in The Ego and the Id (1923b) . . . and to a fresh assessment of the sense of guilt" (249). In a more general sense, the paper also "called for an examination of the whole question of the nature of identification" (249). "Mourning and Melancholia" did much more than imagine the connection between the work of mourning and the mechanisms of melancholia.

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[7] I am certain she will dance with Freud and Kristeva, make them blush over cocktails and then not call them in the morning – they will be left desiring her.

The essay has had the most impact and most vibrant life in the work of other psychoanalysts who explore depression or melancholia. From Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Shell and the Kernal*, to Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun* and Jacques Hassoun's *Cruelty of Depression*, Freud's essay still plays a part in modern theoretical and analytical work. As brief as the essay is, and as un-illustrated (Freud makes no specific reference to analysands and does not cite specific clinical notes), it has inspired and endured. I chose it first because not to include it would be an oversight. Second, I believe its inclusion in the sort of dialectical reading each chapter undertakes here will de-condense this intensely packed essay. The neurotic's amorous and existential questioning seems best suited to get Freud's essay to speak.

Julia Kristeva's fourth chapter from *Time and Sense*, "The Experience of Time Embodied," is peculiar in form and perhaps even more peculiar in its barely repressed desire for the author she discusses, Proust. Her almost manic desire for the return of the repressed and her sensitive and subtle explorations of Proust's stylistic use of time will bring to this chapter's dialectical reading the important question of how time functions in the process of writing and reading, a question not all that different from the neurotic's question: "To be or not to be." Her related emphasis on Proust's style will lend us a vocabulary with which to analyze the 'style' of repression and how it might appear as a textual representation seducing the reader to desire or inspire the return of the repressed.

I bring these three texts together to create an open conversation in which to explore the roles that time and repression play in the imaginary life of the melancholic.

i. CARNIVAL OF FORGETTING:

> I have a cottage in the country. In the country whatever happens, happens in nature. When snow falls. When fog sets in. When trees fall down across the road. When the lake freezes. When it is picking season. The only carnivals here are nature's own. The only festivals, the only holidays, are supplied by the hills and lakes and forests. (91)
>
> *The Substance of Forgetting*
>
> Kristjana Gunnars

> Just when you escape you have yourself to fear.
>
> "Purple People"
>
> Tori Amos

Though it is not until late in *The Substance of Forgetting* that the unnamed narrator reflects on her relationship with the country around her cottage, from the start she has an intimate and psychological connection with everything that goes on around her. The landscape is both literal and psychological, and her struggles with remembering and forgetting, with the *jouissance*[8] of her own life, are intimately tied to the weather patterns and natural developments around her -- it is a natural drama, a carnival, a festival of her own making and in every sense a landscape where she tries to come to terms with her own melancholic reflections.[9]

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[8] For Lacan, *jouissance* means more than pleasure, "it evokes an eroticized death-drive and a degree of intensity which takes the subject beyond the pleasure principle. Pleasure is described as an obstacle to *jouissance*" (Macey, *Penguin Dictionary* 210). In *Black Sun*, Kristeva distinguishes between "[t]wo forms of jouissance [that] seem possible for a woman. On the one hand there is phallic jouissance – competing or identifying with the partner's symbolic power – which mobilizes the clitoris. On the other hand, there is an other jouissance that fantasy imagines and carries out by aiming more deeply at psychic space, and the space of the body as well" (78).

One of her central impressions is that the landscape reflects back what she herself is feeling or experiencing. She imagines that "we have been dreaming too much, the forest and I" (12), thereby both finding companionship perhaps and witness to her dreaming. Similarly, she later in the novel observes that "the veil of the morning has lifted . . . All melts into one" (109). Then only a few paragraphs later she observes about herself that, "All my memories will run together and I will be glad they do" (109). This does, however, seem different than pathetic fallacy, perhaps because of the intensity of the landscape in comparison to her relatively passive subjectivity. Either there exists a dynamic excess in the landscape around her or she endows that landscape with agency and personality, with the similar troubles and vagaries that she suffers, but in either case the two are indivisible and part of some greater plan of her devising.

On the one hand, this need for a double might denote nothing more than the need for company and the desire to be alone (but not alone). Yet, on the other hand, as she herself notes, "There is nothing to see when you stare into the grey thickness except your own visions" (12). Each projection and indeed the very imaginary relationship between herself and the landscape is indivisibly connected to her consciousness of the narcissistic nature of what she sees – she sees and is aware of her own imaginary part in her visions. All that known, she continues to give the landscape both a personality and a set of conflicts and emotions that corresponds to her own reality. It is a landscape associated with dreaming and with an altered state of consciousness, and though this is sometimes something she is disconcerted about, for the most part, it is something she embraces, particularly when she wonders, "Perhaps we can deny what we see with our eyes and substitute what we see with our desire" (16). Imagined reality rules despite her awareness of its narcissism and its onanism -- fantasy is what she longs for in her cabin on the hill.

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[9] Paul Hjartarson, in "Transformation of the 'I': Self and Community in the Poetry of Kristjana Gunnars," points out that the speaker of *Night Workers of Ragnarök* "identifies herself in terms of what she has lost, and although she speaks of family, of friends, and of the daily rituals of life in Iceland, she most frequently locates herself in relation to the natural world from which she is estranged but to which she nevertheless clings" (131). This connection is even more profound in *The Substance of Forgetting*, as we shall see.

She is acutely aware, though, that these visions, dreams, and desires are hers, but not her. The presence of the fog and the clouds, her desire for moments of clarity betray a corresponding desire: "I have been thinking that under the clouds I have lost my mirror" (59). She confesses in a backwards fashion when she notes that, "In this gentlest land possible I only want to desire the hour of clarity in the lake when the forest can see its face in the water" (13). She *wants to* desire that clarity and this is very ambiguous. Does it mean that she currently wants something else? If the landscape is any evidence of what she will choose over the clarity (what is making her desire for it future tense) then what she wants most of all are the visions and the dreams. The clarity she *wants to* desire will remain elusive until those visions and dreams lose their allure.

Yet there are other ways to read this forestalling, this willingness to wait for clarity. Judith Owens discusses a similar resistance in her essay "'Drawing / in': Wholeness and Dislocation in the Works of Kristjana Gunnars," where she looks at Gunnars's poetry collection, *The Night Workers of Ragnarök*:

> Change and danger always await, threatening to undermine solidity, threatening to undo structures of eternity. Even the "horizon," which can so readily figure expansiveness, the widening of vistas in time and space,

> undergoes a "narrowing" to "drops in the rumbling / end: then / the falls"(9) when filtered through the spray of water. (73)

This narrowing in *Night Workers* is similar to the threat of the prowler figure in *The Prowler*, the corporeal and infectious fear of the diseased text in *The Rose Garden*,[10] and the more abstract trope of distance in *Night Train to Nykøbing*. This prevalence of threat in Gunnars's works suggests that the conditional tense used by *Substance*'s narrator who "waits to desire that clarity" might symbolize a larger resistance, a larger fear.[11]

The choice of landscape and the refusal of other landscapes becomes the most telling window to this fear, this desire currently against clarity. Not just any landscape will do, and, in particular, the landscape where she and her lover had their affair does not suffice. She needs the landscape to be alien and yet her own, and she needs solitude: "I do not want to walk across the cold prairie looking for myself. Trying to catch my vain reflection in the dropping snow" (117). A bleak world would not provide the mirror she is seeking. Her psychic struggle, it seems, requires a mirror of abundance, excess even, and the timelessness she feels in the valley.

The distinction she makes between the valley and the prairie winter landscape of the affair marks the difference between the present tense and the past tense of the affair, and, more specifically, the difference between the presence and absence of the beloved. When discussing the prairie town where they meet, she notes that "[t]hese midwestern towns are so thin and lonely" (87). In contrast, in the valley she describes how "The quiet hours drip" (11), how "[d]ay crawls over slow day" (14) and how "the lethargic drops [of meltwater] hang . . . as if they were translucent pregnant spiders"(11). The valley seems to correspond to where she is psychologically, as she begins her whole narrative by stating, "I would say I am tired. I thought I could hardly get more tired and then I did" (11). It is a place the beloved never visits, and more accurately reflects her current psychological condition than their romantic connection; for that there are the memories of the bleak mid-western town, the threat of the train and the threat of a body too close to her.

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[10] The narrator fears that "if you have spent time with [people who are prone to sorrow], with their writing, you pick it up like a disease. The diseased reader" (57). What is interesting is that the narrator refers to the reader as diseased, instead of the writer or the text. In a dialectical turn she seems to be suggesting that the text and the writer might catch the disease of sorrow from the reader.

[11] This larger fear seems implicitly connected to the narrator's fear of giving up the past. Hjartarson, in looking at the protagonist of Gunnars's short story "Grasses," similarly suggests that she is "[u]nable to enter 'the old vision' or to dismiss it out of hand, caught between the death of one world and the birth of another, her life seems 'prolonged beyond endurance'. She is constituted by her loss, and like Sack's mariner, lives in a world without a past or a future" (129). This ambivalent world is the valley the melancholy narrator of *Substance* inhabits.

The Substance of Forgetting's narrator's sense of being caught between landscapes recurs in Gunnars's other works. In *Zero Hour*, the narrator describes her move to Winnipeg in similar terms:

> To write this I have come to the Gateway to the West. Not because the west is intriguing. But because it is there: open, dry, with little culture and much politics. And beyond the West there is the ocean. The jungle. The rains. That is a place to long for. To think towards. (9)

As this first paragraph of the text suggests, it is not just the qualities of the two landscapes that are significant, but perhaps even more so the contrast and the distance between.[12] Distance then – as the trope of a split subjectivity that hovers between self and other, here and there – is what defines the narrator's writing, her longing.[13]

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[12] While driving Kristjana Gunnars's jeep from Edmonton to Vancouver (a favour that got me closer to the landscape and beloved I longed for) I pondered her narrator's claim that she moved to Winnipeg "not because the West is intriguing"(9). Gunnars herself moved from Winnipeg to Edmonton to the Okanagan Valley (the interior of British Columbia) to the Sunshine Coast and her novels followed roughly the same change in landscapes – there must have been something intriguing for the author that was not there for the narrator of *Zero Hour*. And after she reaches the Sunshine Coast and can go no further West in *Night Train to Nykøbing*, the narrator of that book loses interest in her cabin there and strongly contemplates moving to

The narrator of *Substance* retreats to the Okanagan landscape to find such a distance, but instead finds unexpected excesses and chaos that trouble any separation. Some unseen internal struggle expresses itself on the landscape around her and though this seems unconscious, she also is aware that, "When you try not to hear stories they come out all around you anyway. Suddenly you hear things you never wanted to know" (22). Conscious or unconscious, imaginary or real, how she perceives the place around her and the events that occur have a psychological significance as they mediate her experiences and her affect.

When the apricots on her orchard trees ripen and begin to fall, their abundance and her struggle with them give the reader a first sign of what she is facing psychically. She admits that, "When [she] slept at night [she] even dreamed of apricots" (26), and,

> They were falling from the trees faster than I could pick them. . . .No matter how many bags we took to the road or how many we filled with fallen fruit, the ground was forever littered with the same number of apricots. Every time one was picked up another fell from the tree to take its place. The fruit lay rotting and fermenting. We gave up . . . . In the end I sat on my front steps and looked at the mess of fruit on the ground and the thousands still on the trees. The air was filled with the smell of fermenting apricots. I knew I could not even give my fruit away. (28)

Denmark, her family's place of origins. Like her characteristic style of circling memories, of repeating, she herself seems to circle across Western Canada and then reach back to her origins, hopefully to return again.

[13] There is a strong similarity between this trope of distance and what Owens calls "boundary time, between dark and dawn . . . she desires a momentary stasis" (73). Owens is looking particularly at a poem in which "[t]he use of the past tense shows the moment of rest, of fulfillment, to be unrealized, while the images of boundary time, time which will immediately turn into something else, show such equilibrium to be unrealizable" (73), but in general "boundary time" in its various guises in Gunnars's work is untenable. The narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* does not use the past tense, but uses the future conditional, which makes the "hour of clarity" just as fleeting and unobtainable as "boundary time." These boundary times are melancholy moments, untenable but desired all the same.

The apricots bring with them an excess that the narrator cannot overcome, despite her efforts otherwise. Something she cannot deal with is returning in this excess, and the futility of the effort emphasizes that her ability to repress it has broken down. So excess, futility, and desire are all part of her story.

As if the apricot excess were not enough, the bees from a neighboring farm then find the rotting fruit: "[f]or them it was paradise . . . I learned to recognize the sound of bee happiness" (29). In a perverse turn, her own excess, what she cannot contain, becomes a site of pleasure for others, the bees. Then, "[she] realized all the bees were drunk" (29) and her "little orchard rang with laughter" (30), as the site of excess becomes a site of another excess. Futility takes on a carnivalesque flavour that exceeds her control and celebrates itself.

This escalating excessiveness seems in search of an endpoint, and the narrator finds it when she least expects it, in a turn that pushes metaphor to its limits:

> One morning when I looked out the kitchen window I saw that my biggest apricot tree had fallen. It was the tree just outside the window, the one I enjoyed looking at when I put water on for coffee. Now it lay on the ground, spread across the hillside that made up my front yard. It had fallen over all the juniper bushes growing to keep the soil from eroding and moving down to the cottage. It must have been the fruit. The branches had grown so heavy with fruit that the whole tree fell with a crack and lay spread out on my property. (57)

Excess reaches saturation, and this site of destruction, of the fallen tree, becomes the place of a revelation. The narrator confesses, "I did not think the joy of living would fell them" (58), and with this revelation she realizes the end point of her struggle and the possible destruction she might face under the weight of too many reminiscences. Fear, contradictorily here, both justifies repression and forgetfulness as it would ease the conscious mind and warns against the return of the repressed, the danger of an overburdened unconscious mind. The apricot trees end their life as a metaphor when she calls "Josef the yardkeeper. He came and sawed the tree into bits of firewood and stacked them in the woodpile behind the cottage" (57). The tree is parceled away, stacked and waiting to be consumed – excess collapsed under its own weight dissipates easily, as though it was never there. The metaphor of the fallen apricot tree is replaced by another metaphor: the metaphor of the endpoint.

Though that image of abundance has run its course, the threat still remains and returns later when after a windy night she finds "a giant jack pine has been ripped out of the earth by the wind" (86) and worries that, "perhaps the whole forest is tottering on the brink of collapse, the tiny root systems just barely holding the heavy trunks steady" (86). The threat endures as a residue, exists less as abundance and more as an unperceivable weakness, something beyond the periphery of her vision, in a seemingly unconscious place. She, too, has reached the endpoint of repression.

The threat that has relocated to the unconscious will not remain there. In the grand scheme of things, the end of the tree is not an endpoint to the psychic work she is doing. Once the apricot tree is cut and stacked behind the cottage, the narrative goes in search of another excess. At the end of the apricot season, and with the final destruction of the largest tree, abundance moves to the seeder bugs that come in swarms. At first there are only a few, and she describes how one such "creature would crawl very slowly, with difficulty, toward some indefinite goal" (62), perhaps less a metaphor of the narrator's journey and more the creep of story towards some deliberate end, or the tendency of language to slip away on her.

At first, like the apricots, the bugs are characterized by excessive weight and abundance:

> A bug would crash with the low humming of an engine gone berserk and out of control. The stink bugs malfunctioned easily. They were too heavy for themselves. They crashed in strange sites. They would crash onto the table on the veranda and lie dazed next to a glass of iced tea. They crashed into the hair of someone bending down to pick a weed. They crashed next to the face of someone lying on a mat sunbathing. (63)

The stink bugs, like the apricots, are everywhere and abundant. Just as the apricot tree was weighed down until it was destroyed under so much weight, the bugs are "too heavy for themselves," have a similar gravity, so much so that they are constantly falling. The bugs, though, exceed both the apricots and the fallible trees, for they are able to get inside, "even when no doors or windows were opened"(63). Unlike the apricot tree, the bugs are replaceable and relentless: "They were the clumsiest bugs ever invented. Yet no matter how clumsy they were their numbers continued to increase . . . They would not stop. They never stopped" (64). Even as one bug might die from its clumsiness or its heaviness, there are more to replace it. They mark a shift in the narrator's perception of the weight bearing down upon her, for now it is everywhere – this is the evolution of excess.[14]

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[14] Throughout, the excessive presence of the bugs is emphasized by the absence of a definite subject in relation to them: "[t]hey crashed into the hair of *someone* bending down to pick a weed. They crashed next

The psychic measure of these abundances only becomes clear in contrasts. Ostensibly the narrator has retreated to the Okanagan Valley because she is "tired" (11) and wants "to desire clarity" (13). The excessiveness, the abundance, the fruit, the destruction, the floods, all only make sense when she compares the landscape to other possible places:

> I live here because here I can make all the mistakes I desire. All I will hear will be joyful laughter. There are no censors here. There are only dark blue mornings when the lake water is blank and the mountain tries to find its own reflection when the early clouds have lifted. Your mistakes define you. To be censored from your mistakes is to be censored from yourself. I do not want to wander across the cold prairie looking for myself. Trying to catch my vain reflection in the dropping snow. (116-117)

In the abundance, the excess she finds all aspects of herself, finds the mistakes as well as the joyful laughter. Here the dropping snow signifies the landscape of the affair, and in many ways the valley where she is at home is the repository of everything she could not express or see in the landscape of the affair.

The narrator also juxtaposes this excess with the landscape of her childhood. She confesses, "I had no idea what would become of all the fruit . . . all the visions in my memory of signs of malnutrition for lack of fruit were balking at the abundance around me as though my mind were playing tricks on me. Or perhaps reality was" (103-104). Here the spectral possibility that she is imagining all the excess is raised again, and her childhood malnutrition absurdly juxtaposed with the present excess of fruit leads her to

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to the face of *someone* lying on a mat sunbathing" (emphasis added, 63). The bugs are described only in relation to "someone," and that person is not given a name. It is as though the excessiveness of the bugs consumes the narrator's subjectivity, transforming the myriad aspects of her to a faceless "someone."

personify her memories so she finds them "balking at the abundance." The past makes her doubt the present, her previous experiences making the excess something she cannot internalize or represent entirely.[15] The excess, through juxtaposition, signifies that which she cannot incorporate, both literally and figuratively here, for she has not enough mouths to keep up with the orchards.

This distinction between what she sees and what she experiences, this self-reflective faculty, was what attracted her to the cabin in the first place. When she first came to see the cabin there were floods, and, "[h]ouses began to move in the transferal of mud" (66). The narrator notes that, "[f]rom [her] dry cottage [she] could watch the disasters below. How some people's lives were running into chaos. I could think about the beautiful rain coming like silver from the sky. How it brings down the clouds. How all things are stirred"(66). This detachment from the suffering of the others below is illusionary. Their lives are not that far from her own, and she has just previous to this written, "[p]erhaps all stories run into chaos" (59), even as she imagines her story, on the hill, might be immune. The "juniper bushes growing to keep the soil from eroding and moving down to the cottage" (57) seem no match for the story at hand or her fear – she is drawn to the transferal below.

Yet her distance from the flooding is a metaphor here for her distance from the affair, and her attempts to separate herself from those memories. She came to the valley to forget, and, paradoxically, to seek clarity. This contradictory intent leads her to look for a safe perspective on her memories while she is simultaneously afraid of losing her connection to them. She can lament, on the one hand, "[m]y life has not been lived by me" (33), while on the other she can reflect that, "[i]t is so much easier now to talk about desire" (47). Similarly and symbolically, there in the Okanagan, towards the end of the novel, she finds a fire lookout and climbs up it, but notes, "I do not know why I am looking. There is no real reason for it" (106). She had come searching for a perspective, had come searching for clarity, but in the end, she does not know why she is looking.

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[15] This tension between the past and the present is common in Gunnars's works. Owens points out that "[c]ritics and reviewers have attended, generally, to her treatment of alienation, loss, estrangement, themes very often developed from the perspective of an immigrant, a 'hybrid,' to use one of Gunnars's own images (*Night Workers* 53) belonging wholly to neither one world nor another" (64).

Although the narrator of *Substance* seeks distance from the landscape of the affair as a form of retreat, she also seeks solitude. The narrator of *Night Train to Nykøbing* ponders a similar desire for solitude, and wonders "why some writers absent themselves from society like that. Why it becomes so important to go away, into the countryside by yourself, when what you do in life is write" (60). When she retreats to her home on the Sunshine Coast she confesses "[her] reasons for moving into the country, away from everything, were still unclear to [her]. [She] did not know what [she] was trying to avoid by being so out of reach" (71). The desire for retreat and solitude are a ripe part of writing folklore, cliché perhaps because of the truth it represents. From Robert Burton's observation that melancholics "had rather write their minds than speak, and above all things love solitariness" (395) to the French novelist Marguerite Duras's argument that

> [t]he person who writes books must always be enveloped by a separation from others. That is one kind of solitude. It is the solitude of the author, of writing . . . Writing was the only thing that populated my life and made it magic. I did it. Writing never left me. (3)

Whether the desire for solitude is a prerequisite for the sort of concentration creativity requires or a protection from the world, similar to the protection writing offers, solitude figures largely in the psychology of the writer as a melancholy place.[16] In Gunnars's case solitude is always paradoxical, for her narrator's desire to find herself at the house in the Okanagan Valley is met by the assault of memories of the affair and the chaotic excess of the valley. Similarly, in *The Rose Garden* the narrator feels "[u]nder scrutiny, it seemed, by all of Germany. Because the watchful eyes were [her] own. As [she] had scattered [herself] over everything, [she] looked back at [herself] from everywhere" (29). Likewise, the narrator of *Night Train to Nykøbing* retreats to her cabin on the Sunshine Coast to find herself again but is met by an assault of affect surrounding the relationship. Solitude is always as fleeting as "boundary time" in *The Night Workers of Ragnarök* and "the hour of clarity" in *The Substance of Forgetting*.

The distance she seeks in the valley, from the houses moving in the transferal of mud below, from the landscape of the affair, represents the narrator's desire and attempt to repress the overwhelming affect of the affair. This resistance to affect is also what she desires in the title: to forget. The valley, however, is a paradoxical space: it is distant from the landscape of the affair and yet contradictorily it becomes a landscape in which she can witness her own excess, mistakes and all. Repression and its return provide a cyclical approach to dealing with the excess of affect associated with the affair. This paradox is the key to her struggle with her own desire and her own melancholia.

In the final pages of the narrative, she remarks, "I am thinking home is where you choose to forget and choose to remember at the same time . . . There is no reason to repress any memory. There is no reason to hold it up against the daylight either" (125). For her the paradox has been that repression and the return of the repressed in the gaudy excess of the landscape and nature around her has permitted her to reach this affirmation of forgetting and remembering. There has been no direct access to the overwhelming affect she circles around in the narrative, and there is no reason to think there should be, as direct access would mean the death of that affect. Her melancholic imaginary contradictorily seeks to hold onto and be free of the grip of her reminiscences, and repression and projection help to stage the drama of the affect. Her repetitious returns to the drama help to slowly free herself without losing the security and intimacy of what was.

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[16] The narrator of *The Rose Garden* looks to Proust who "decides to withdraw from society in order to attend to his writing . . . Like the lover, the writer has no time for anyone. He has gone from lover to writer and the configurations are the same" (80-81).

The narrative closes with a fragment of the epigraph it began with: "And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow, / Dropping from the veils of the morning . . ." (126). The repeated quotation from Yeats's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is held more briefly here, the emphasis in the end being on Innisfree's slowness of time and the significant motif of "veils." *Substance*'s narrator similarly attempts within the narrative to alter time and chronology's imperatives and to veil her own desire and post-affair affective state. She makes clear to us the role of repression and how it functions more largely within the melancholic's ambivalence.

ii. FOR ALL APPEARANCES MELANCHOLIC

From the start, Freud's theorizing of melancholia is accomplished through the same kinds of contrasts the last section discussed in relation to Kristjana Gunnars's *The Substance of Forgetting*. Affect and landscape do the work in Gunnars's novel, while Freud's theorizing explores melancholia through juxtaposing it with mourning and then mania. These comparisons and contrasts point to the difficult work that goes in to characterizing and analyzing melancholia, where, "one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost" (254) and what consumes the melancholic is "work which is unknown to us" (255). The drama of melancholia, according to Freud, happens offstage, in the realm of the unconscious, so that conjecture and reading between the lines are the only strategies left to the analyst.

With so much information beyond the analyst's and often the analysand's reach, how one theorizes the separation between conscious and unconscious becomes of utmost importance. Freud first approaches melancholia through a comparison with mourning in an attempt to conceive of it in terms of an identifiable and valid cause with a predictable outcome. With mourning, "[w]e rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful" (252). Melancholia, however, lacks the timeliness of mourning, and so requires the attention of an analyst. To confuse matters for the analyst, the two are very similar:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the

> capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. This picture becomes a little more intelligible when we consider that, with one exception, the same traits are met with in mourning. The disturbance of self-regard is absent in mourning; but otherwise the features are the same. (252)

This "lowering of the self-regarding feelings" marks one of the symptoms of melancholia and one of the only distinctions between mourning and melancholia. As Freud so succinctly suggests, "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (254).

The symptom, from both a literary and a psychoanalytic perspective, seems a question in search of an answer. This desire in reading is a question of the origins of melancholia. In each case,

> the exciting causes due to environmental influences are, so far as we can discern them at all, the same for both conditions. Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of a pathological disposition. (251)

Since it is difficult to identify the exciting cause, the search for an answer to the question of the symptom becomes twofold – both exciting cause and symptom are now in need of origins. Freud's only recourse, then, is to raise the tautological explanation of pathological disposition, though it is only a suspicion.[17] The danger with the melancholic and the analyst's countertransference, however, is that suspicions might be all he can offer, so they are left to stand.

There is, however, one other defining feature that Freud sees as constituent of melancholia's origins. Beyond the obvious exciting causes, Freud notes that there is a particular ambivalence that distinguishes melancholia from mourning:

> In melancholia the relation to the object is no simple one; it is complicated by the conflict due to ambivalence. The ambivalence is either constitutional, i.e. is an element of every love-relation formed by this particular ego, or else it proceeds precisely from those experiences that involved the threat of losing the object. For this reason the exciting causes of melancholia have a much wider range than those of mourning, which is for the most part occasioned only by a real loss of the object, by its death. (266)

The narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* expresses a similar ambivalence: her attraction and fascination with distance (being caught between here and there), language (that says too little and too much), presence and absence, fear and desire. Nearly all relations with the other and the self are accompanied by ambivalence.

This prevalence of ambivalence, as Freud argues above, makes it difficult to establish an exciting cause in melancholia. Ambivalence links the exciting cause and some origin that established the ambivalence in the first place so that whatever and whomever mediates that relationship is somehow affected and implicated. As a result, whether due to the constitutional predisposition or sensitivity to the threat of losing the object, the melancholic subject's exciting causes are many and of a wider range. As a result, the exciting cause has a much more tenuous relationship with the resulting melancholia. Left with little to work with in the present moment of analysis, the analyst finds melancholia's origins paradoxically even more significant and remote.

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[17] There are strong parallels between Freud's suspicions of a pathological disposition and the new regime of pharmacology and its faith in medicating, as though melancholia is only a question of a corporeal lack.

The inciting causes in melancholia generally invoke an ambivalence that corresponds to the beloved object or threatens it. Indeed, as Freud argued earlier in the essay,

> [i]n melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness extend for the most part beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being slighted, neglected, or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence. This conflict due to ambivalence, which sometimes arises more from real experiences, sometimes more from constitutional factors, must not be overlooked among the preconditions of melancholia. (260)

Whether the melancholic is predisposed to search out ambivalent situations or just has a predisposition to react to certain love situations with a melancholy ambivalence, whether he is attracted to relationships that contain in them both love and hate or is just excited by occasions in which there is "the threat of losing the object," it seems the melancholic is made more for passion than love.

Yet, what predisposes the melancholic to ambivalence, to passion, if it is not first of all love? The retreat Freud describes, the cessation of interest in the external world, and the self-reproach that distinguishes melancholia from mourning, Freud argues, all demarcate an unconscious turn, and this unconscious work might show us what consumes the melancholic mind:

> The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love (e.g. in the case of a betrothed girl who has been jilted). In yet other cases one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either . . . he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. This would suggest that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradiction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious. (254)

The melancholic's work, unlike the work of mourning, deals with the loss in an unconscious manner, the reaction being internalized and defensive. This is similar to *The Substance of Forgetting* where the narrator's unconscious work is devised through repression and the external world is enlisted to illustrate or perform the internal work. In the end, through the excessive landscape around her Gunnars's narrator suggests what Freud does not: perhaps the melancholic's work is not specifically internal but necessarily ambivalent, both internal and external at once, indeed alternating between evoking and refusing the distinction.

In order to understand this retreat to the unconscious, and in the case of *Substance*'s narrator the retreat to the valley, this study must turn to the predisposition of the melancholic and the preconditions that make such a retreat possible. Freud, in theorizing these required conditions, points to what looks like a contradiction in the melancholic subject's relations with the other before the shattering of the relation:

> On the one hand, a strong fixation to the loved object must have been present; on the other hand, in contradiction to this, the object cathexis must have had little power of resistance. As Otto Rank has aptly remarked, this contradiction seems to imply that the object-choice has been effected on a narcissistic basis, so that the object-cathexis, when obstacles come in its way, can regress to narcissism. The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up. (258)

There is a contradiction here, where the preconditions require that the melancholic have had a "strong fixation to the loved object" and yet the cathexis with that object must have had little or no power of resistance. It is *The Substance of Forgetting*'s narrator's confession that what the beloved says is "beside the point"(20), and that "[she is] imagining everything" (20). Is this a passion built on both love and hate, a connection built to be dismantled? The narcissistic identification, then, has a built in safeguard where the subject can develop a "strong fixation," and yet "regress to narcissism" when that fixation is threatened. It is an always possible gesture, a combination of protection and preservation.

It would seem that the move to preserve and protect is ostensibly for the safekeeping of the self, yet on the contrary, this move could be to preserve the other at the price of the self. The method to the madness, as Freud points out, is that "by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction" (267). Therein it becomes apparent that "[i]n the two opposed situations of being most intensely in love and of suicide the ego is overwhelmed by the object, though in totally different ways" (261). This overwhelming appears to be a sacrifice, and, "thus in regression from narcissistic object-choice the object has, it is true, been got rid of, but it nevertheless proved more powerful than the ego itself" (261). The ego is overwhelmed with the loss of the beloved, and so the subject takes flight into the ego and attempts to take the beloved with him, a melancholic turn to preserve pleasure.

Yet, the melancholy neurotic's existential question must find some answer in the (beloved) other, an answer he refuses to relinquish. Preservation is sought through narcissistic identification and the flight inwards that Freud refers to as incorporation: "The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it" (258). The desire to incorporate is, then, both amorous and destructive. In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Freud argues that,

> Preliminary stages of love emerge as provisional sexual aims while the sexual instincts are passing through their complicated development. As the first of these aims we recognize the phase of incorporating or devouring - a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence and which may therefore be described as ambivalent . . . Love in

> this form and at this preliminary stage is hardly to be distinguished from hate in its attitude towards the object. Not until the genital organization is established does love become the opposite of hate. (136-137)

The subject's attempts to incorporate the other are ambivalent, both a gesture of love and hate, but still an irrevocable attempt to abolish in part the other's "separate existence" – the other cannot be entirely trusted, so cannot be entirely loved, nor entirely hated.[18]

This attempt to abolish what is separate is an attempt to reconcile self and other by making what is external into something internal. It is what distinguishes the act of incorporation from love: "Hate, as a relation of objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego's primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli" (137). This is also why, in the symptoms Freud lists, there are correlations between the melancholic's, "cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity" (252). The external world is a paradoxical place in the sense that for the melancholic it is the most uncertain one, and yet it holds the only possibility for love, or relations that are not entirely narcissistic. Anxiety, provoked by exciting causes – indeed, for the melancholic, excited just by the common "ambivalence in love-relationships" (260) – creates a window of opportunity where the melancholic can either flee inward or risk staying.

Paradoxically, it could be both hope and despair that cause the melancholic to flee: hope of prolonging what pleasure the love relationship did give; and despair that the love-relationship might last or endure. Caught on the passionate border between the two, incorporation seems inseparably an act of both. There is, however, no account in Freud's

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[18] Seen slightly askew, this is also simply the fine line between 'I want to do you' and 'I want to be you.' The melancholic's incorporation invariably has this ambivalence between the desire to preserve the other and the desire to become the other.

"Mourning and Melancholia" of the jouissance in the drama itself. Never fully capturing or retaining the lost object in incorporation yet not entirely succumbing to loss, the melancholic vacillates between hope and despair caught in a drama staged at the borders of his being and the edge of oblivion. He enacts the loss over and over, never more than a child with a spool staging the departure and return of the mother seeking some impossible mastery.

The only end Freud sees for the melancholic is also the second major contrast he makes with melancholia: mania. He argues that "melancholia tends to change round into mania -- a state which is the opposite of it in its symptoms" (262). He regards mania as "nothing other than a triumph" (264) and conjectures that since "the content of mania is no different from that of melancholia . . . both disorders are wrestling with the same 'complex', but that probably in melancholia the ego has succumbed to the complex whereas in mania it has mastered it or pushed it aside" (263). This mastery he describes depends on the contrasts he sees between the two, and the chronology he perceives:

> In mania, the ego must have got over the loss of the object (or its mourning over the loss, or perhaps the object itself), and thereupon the whole quota of anticathexis which the painful suffering of melancholia had drawn to itself from the ego and 'bound' will have become available [p.262]. Moreover, the manic subject plainly demonstrates his liberation from the object which was the cause of his suffering, by seeking like a ravenously hungry man for new object-cathexes. (264)

It is a chicken or egg theory in some senses, for is mania the triumph or is melancholia the cure to mania's desperate search? And, in the end, how is the external shamelessness Freud describes in melancholia different from the active work of mania?

What Freud cannot resolve is how an inhibition of activity in melancholia could lead to so drastic an expenditure of energy in mania. This is a problem of what Freud calls "the economy of energy," and it is a problem he admits he cannot solve when it comes to mania: "In the first place, normal mourning, too, overcomes the loss of the object, and it, too, while it lasts, absorbs all the energies of the ego. Why, then, after it has run its course, is there no hint in its case of the economic condition for a phase of triumph?" (264). Freud's only theoretical recourse is to isolate the one difference in the work of mourning and melancholia and attribute it to that:

> Of the three preconditions of melancholia -- loss of the object, ambivalence, and regression of libido into the ego -- the first two are also found in the obsessional self-reproaches arising after a death has occurred. In those cases it is unquestionably the ambivalence which is the motive force of the conflict, and observation shows that after the conflict has come to an end there is nothing left over in the nature of the factor as the only one responsible for the result. The accumulation of cathexis which is at first bound and then, after the work of melancholia is finished, becomes free and makes mania possible must be linked with regression of the libido to narcissism. (267-268)

The work of melancholia, according to this economy of energy, requires an excessive amount of energy to maintain itself, and this energy is released once the work of melancholia is finished.[19]

The problem with Freud's theorizing here is that he does not follow through with it. If neither mania nor melancholia can define what it is that motivates them, if it is beyond their perception, it must still be in the realm of the unconscious -- each of them are involved with work that is connected to the unconscious. The search for new objects might, literally speaking, mark a triumph of the ego over the incorporated object (as Freud suggests above), but seen differently it could just be the ego looking for something else to rule over it, some other object to master it. Mania then could be perceived as the repression of melancholia and its ambivalence. Mania marks the exhaustion of the relationship with the incorporated object, certainly, but it also seems to be the search for a replacement. This search and the inevitable return of the repressed ensure a continuation of melancholia – like an addict looking for a fix.

Reading back through *The Substance of Forgetting*, there is the possibility of viewing the excessive landscape of the narrator's valley as manic. Then mania looks to be just another step in the melancholic's work, and the truce she finds at the end of the narrative might be the space between melancholia and mania. The Okanagan valley by extension is the manic landscape, and yet it is still the work of reminiscences and unrepresentable loss and the search for new object cathexes. The drama that unfolds in Freud's comparisons with melancholia, mourning, and mania involves the subject's attempts to negotiate the fraught border between his or her internal and external world. For Freud, the melancholic is predisposed to a vulnerability or fear in regards to that border between the self and the world, and melancholia is the work brought on by the various exciting influences, the vicissitudes of being.

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[19] This construction of mania as a triumph over melancholia privileges the activity of mania over the apparent passivity of melancholia (though, ironically, we have just seen that Freud imagines melancholia involves the expenditure of an enormous energy). In the grand scheme of Freud's comparisons and contrasts, the apparent moral of the story seems to be that melancholia is a failed mourning and something that needs to be triumphed over by mania.

iii. LOVE, HATE, AND MEMORY

> Remembering through the senses is the same as being in love, and these two processes constitute the narrator's essence. His various 'selves' can be linked to his recollections of love and thus of sensory experience, and they therefore take him as far as possible from the trifling contingencies of reality. (17)
>
> Julia Kristeva
>
> *Time & Sense*

Melancholia is a problem of insides and outsides. The vagaries that define Gunnars's unnamed narrator's struggle between memory and her present landscape -- between inside and outside -- and Freud's trouble in perceiving what the melancholic has lost and his own perception of the melancholic's inner work both lead us to understand melancholia as a struggle between unconscious and conscious mechanisms. This struggle is also explored through the relationship between writer, text, and reader in Julia Kristeva's fourth chapter of *Time and Sense*, "The Experience of Time Embodied." Generally, Kristeva is concerned with the novelistic possibility of capturing time and transmitting experience through exploring Proust's "style", his peculiar way of "X-raying a memory"(168). Ultimately, though, it becomes clear that the agenda is to theorize the possibility of a writer / text / reader relationship that is, on the one hand, a playing out of grief and melancholia, while on the other, an exciting cause that potentially develops the same affect in the reader. Ultimately, what bridges the gap is the role that sensory experience plays in the relationship.

Kristeva seeks to connect Proust's own lived experience and ambivalent feelings towards his mother with her own fraught reading experience. In doing so, she creates a drama in which she becomes the privileged reader, the reader who evidently understands Proust better than his own mother could and who can ultimately witness his efforts, as unwieldy and sadistic as they are. This relationship offers the potential of an "experience," which, more than just any exciting cause, is an ambiguous moment in time that measures the limits of the self. It demarcates a significant moment in the self's search for something external to itself that, as of yet in our travels, remains illusory and out of reach – it is *the reader's* exciting cause, the subject of *the reader's* experience in this chapter then. If we can understand the melancholic's style and the nature of his or her "experience," perhaps we can understand the desire behind Freud's observations on the melancholic's insistent communicativeness and Gunnars's narrator's overabundant landscape.

Experience, in "The Experience of Time Embodied," is a combination of an exciting cause, a stylistic representation, and a willing and susceptible reader. These three provide a stage upon which the drama of being is played out. As such, it demarcates a place where the subject's psychic "map" is altered:

> Whether experience is a felt emotion, an active synthesis, or both at the same time, it interrupts the subject's social and verbal displays and reshapes his psychic map. For this reason, it is inseparable from desire and

> love. Inside them and through them, experience is felt to be a conversion. Partaking of psychology and of representation, experience marks the fragile, painful, or joyous bridge between the body and the idea, which makes such distinctions obsolete. (194)

Imagined another way, this is the border where the self as reflexive, narcissistic, and theoretical must come face to face with the most troublesome of "reality-testing," wherein the imaginary and what the body experiences as real collide. Such a collision requires that 'reality" in its bodily sense correspond in some way to the subject's imaginary relations. The two must be mutually supportive or experience cannot alter the subject's psychic map.

This collaboration between the subject's imaginary relations and his or her bodily reality draws to the fore what investment the subject has in the imaginary. The resulting experience defines the subject's predisposition, the method of their object choice:

> Whether we encounter it in the cosmos, or with a paternal god, or through an artistic mastery of sounds, colors, or language, experience unveils the subject's narcissistic feeling of nonfulfillment as well as the volatile nature of his individuation process. Experience includes depression, hallucination, longing, and all the graces and joys procured by compensation, reunion, or independence. (193)

As a scene where the subject plays out the drama of his or her individuation, experience is a very revealing moment in the psychic life of the subject. It troubles the border between inside and outside and exists at the very limits of the subject's relationship to the rest of the world.

The idea and the body, then, must correspond on some level for experience to occur, yet that is mere architecture. The force behind the creation of experience is what inspires the subject to invest and then to alter his or her psychic map. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud argues that it is ambivalence which is a significant exciting cause for melancholia, and particularly the contradictory experiences of love and hate in an object relation. Kristeva theorizes this contradictory moment as an experience, and takes this a step further when she constructs the experience not as an exciting cause, but as the potential access to something else:

> Yet love (when we encounter it) and hate (when it does not destroy us immediately) invariably awaken needs and desires for which we cannot provide a time or a place. Experience is the unique configuration by which we attain jouissance. At the boundaries of the body, in silence or in the excesses of sex, between the world and what I have to say about it, experience is the dynamic between love and hate that makes me a living being . . . It opens me up to myself -- and offers me a space where I can meet other people or where I can become lost. It is a chance I have to take. (198)

Experience, then, as a site of jouissance, alters how I have theorized the melancholic's position vis-a-vis the "exciting cause;" jouissance is to blame for exciting the melancholic structure, yet it is also a chance the melancholic has to take. In *The Substance of Forgetting* the narrator's relationship to the excesses she finds in the valley (as the return of the repressed) are intense enough and have enough impact to be considered what Kristeva terms "experiences" – they alter her psychological map and bring her to the borders of herself despite her desire for solitude and escape. And in that instance, the reader is aware, as she seems to be too, that the valley is a chance she has to take.

In "The Experience of Time Embodied," Kristeva meta-textually explores "experience" through drawing Proust's own lived experience into relation with his novel and with her own experience of reading it. This "experience" in reading and writing points to the transferential aspect of the melancholic's concentration, the paradox of his cessation of interest in the outside world and his "insistent communicativeness." This readerly effect that provokes the reader to write her own experience is not unique to Kristeva in *Time & Sense*. Indeed, her "style" frequently involves her, from her poetic turns in *Black Sun* to the personal essay aspect of "Stabat Mater." Similarly, Robert Burton frequently takes turns that implicate him, and the sheer length of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* implies that it was a subject that would not relinquish or release him. Jacques Hassoun, too, in his *The Cruelty of Depression*, finds himself unwittingly and yet actively involved in the dramas of his analysands. Michael Vincent Miller, in his introduction to *Cruelty*, observes that

> Often [Hassoun's] study of the melancholic temperament teeters precariously on the verge of excess. But it thus conveys the discrepancy one frequently senses between the relatively calm, if sad and withdrawn, social façade of the depressed person and the colliding, explosive forces about to boil over inside. (xix)

The discrepancy between what the melancholic displays and the imagined drama in the melancholic's unconscious provokes Hassoun, and I could extrapolate has something to do with Burton's anxious *Anatomy* and Kristeva's personalized theory in *Black Sun* and *Time and Sense*.

Kristeva theorizes that this provocation is a result of Proustian experience, and she argues that this intense relationship between Proust, his text, and her readerly affect is "transubstantial":

> Proustain experience is "transubstantial" for two reasons. First, memory regains through ideas and words the impenetrable strength of a shock to the senses that immerses the speaking being in Being while encompassing the world in a subjective imaginary. The art of metaphor and of the turn of phrase would thus consist of transmitting this accession to the realm of the ontological, the communion between the psyche and the world. The outside is then reinvested in the inside, which takes pleasure in the outside in order to speak about it. (194)

Kristeva argues here that Proust's style communicates or transmits an "experience" from his psyche to the world, or in this case to the reader, Kristeva. Experience, though, can only become transubstantial when it finds a style that can combine bodily reality and the idea or affect the subject is engaged with.[20]

In the case of Proust, however, the style that seeks to engage bodily reality is taken to an extreme. As Kristeva argues,

> along with this imaginative embodiment of the word and this absorption of the ontological, Proust offered his body to literature and thus to the world.

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[20] We will have more to say about this style in the sixth section of this chapter when we look at language's relationship to transubstantiation, but for our purposes here it suffices to note that this is partly about the discrepancy that Miller noted must have inspired Hassoun's "excess" – it is not that the text contains the idea and the bodily reality, but that it facilitates a relationship between the two.

> At the end of his life, acting like a moribund ascetic, suffocating in a modest room on the rue Hamelin without food or sleep, Proust presented his dinner guests with an example of a dying man who wished to guarantee his resurrection through a book. (194)

What Kristeva is suggesting here is complex. She is not arguing that Proust made the body into literature, but that he attempted, made the offer. She is also arguing that the attempt creates a halo around the text, its style inseparable from the author's own peculiar sublimation and wasting away; thus, the style that incorporates both the idea and the body is irrevocably linked to the author's sacrifice of his own body, the corporeal price and motivation for the style in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.[21]

The intimate connection between Proust's style and the sublimation of his own body cannot be constructed as unconscious, Kristeva argues, but must have some degree of intention afforded it:

> Some writers take this imaginary of experience, or experience as the imaginary, to the point of detachment, irony, or frivolity. Others solemnly reify this imaginary. Yet unless a writer falls into psychosis, he does not forget that experience owes its intensity to signs (music, poetry, painting) that must be manipulated through technique or artifice in order to attain a metamorphosis of all the senses, that is, the simultaneity with Being, with the other, with the beloved. (195)

What Kristeva points to here is the writing act as it is shaped by the desire for communion with or witness from another. Just as Gunnars's narrator in *The Substance of*

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[21] For the writer, is there always a corporeal price to be paid for solitude? For the melancholic with their thin distinction between inside and outside, does solitude lead to the incremental sacrifice of the self that pales in comparison to imaginary worlds?

Forgetting seeks an other in nature and the carnival around her, just as she ultimately writes back to herself, Kristeva argues that the writer who desires to "solemnly reify this imaginary" with the appropriate technique seeks communion, a simultaneity of being with an other.

Paradoxically, of course, this is also inescapably a performance of Kristeva's desire for communion, and the desire she reads in the text is equally her own readerly desire. In order to understand this desire for communion on both sides of the looking glass, it will be useful to delve further into how Kristeva is mapping the relationship between the subject, the text, the narrator and the author. Her first move, in approaching the novel's themes, is to explore their development in the author's life. In the section entitled "The Dead Mother", Kristeva explores the relationship between Proust and his mother, and more particularly between Proust and his grief and guilt in relationship to his mother. As she does in several places in this theoretical text, Kristeva inserts herself into the subject she is exploring:

> Losing someone to death does not free me from the time we lost because we did not love one another enough. Indeed, a loss that engulfs me in time and in a search for the past, a loss that destroys my current identity, is precisely what is known as mourning. The loved one's disappearance makes me realize that I lost a great deal of time in not paying attention to her, to him, to fleeing, to challenging, to being missed by them, to missing myself. What can I do about it now? (173)

Ostensibly this is Kristeva's rhetorical move to implicate the reader, her 'I' and 'me' creating a personal relationship with the text that guides the reader's relationship with reading. Yet, inescapably, this rhetorical move also frames her as the privileged reader, the one Proust and his text anticipate and desire.

In the next paragraph she segues from her personal relationship to the text to Proust's personal life and his grief over the loss of his mother. She first disclaims that

> [n]o single event can ever fully explain the birth of a work of art, not even the death of a mother like Mme Proust. Yet even though the novel had been taking shape for ages, Proust's mourning of his mother signified a new point of reference and a new way of life. (174)

By evoking her own subject position and juxtaposing the novel's representations, she permits herself to then imagine correlations between herself and the text and Proust's own life in a I-shared-now-you-share turn of affairs. This does confuse the subject / object dyad of the writer / reader relationship, and Kristeva's previous argument that "experience marks the . . . bridge between the body and the idea, which makes such distinctions obsolete" (194) seems only preparation to make the distinction between writer and reader obsolete.

Kristeva searches out this ambivalence and finds it in Proust's relationship to his mother, their strong intimacy and his inability to deal with his grief at the loss of her. Kristeva first argues more generally that

> [t]he "vigorous and luxuriant" growth of a literary work requires death. Is it the death of a child? Which one? Albertine? Or is it perhaps the death of the narrator himself, who believes himself to have died many times over since his childhood? (174)

Death for Proust raises an ambivalent grief because his relationship with his mother was already ambivalent. The intense affection between them, for example staged as his bedtime wish for a kiss from her, demands a limit, but when death arrives as that limit and does not resolve the ambivalence, it points to his incorporation of the mother as Other. Kristeva, above, is arguing that death, for the melancholic imagination, leads to the "vigorous and luxuriant" growth of a literary work. Furthermore, it will be capable of provoking an "experience" in its readers.

It is the novel in particular that can facilitate this type of "experience." The time of the novel, then, offers the double possibility of holding on to the lost mother and of possibly playing out grief and finding release:

> The book will transform a graveyard of dead children into an outing and a snack of madeleines by relying on the ambiguous, loving, and vengeful memory of a mother who always loved too much though not enough and who thus made you into a child who never stops dying but who will come back to life and mature within the grassy growth of the book. (174)

The primordial sadomasochism that inspires the urge to write the memory into a book dictates its contradictory agenda: to both remember the mother and yet orchestrate her death so the child will not have to die, but can instead mature. This is a drama played out between the unconscious and the conscious mind, the neurotic's existential question mediated by the incorporated object. The paradox the melancholy neurotic must live with then is 'if she dies I will live,' but 'if she lives I will die.'

For Proust, Kristeva argues that this necessary death of the mother is linked further to his repressed homosexuality and its subsequent liberation upon her demise:

> In Proust's novel, the death of the narrator's grandmother is a mirror image of the exquisite anguish and heartbreaking liberation the son experienced after the death of Mme Proust-Weil. Note that the guilt-ridden portrayal of the loss of the grandmother develops right alongside Proust's gradual avowal of his secret homosexuality. (175)

This "gradual avowal" and the "liberation" he feels provide a greater ambivalence in his relationship to the lost object or ideal, here the mother. Wracked with anguish and excited by liberation, the narrator's experience with death provides an essential "new point of reference"(174) to *In Search of Lost Time*, as Kristeva argues: "With very little masquerading, then, Proust was able to place the maternal figure at the center of all the "intermittencies of the heart," at the center of a primordial sadomasochism" (174).

Excited by death and employing style and the novel to seek out communion, Kristeva's Proust performs an explanation of her own reading performance – it is counter-transference par excellence. Kristeva's theorizing of "transubstantiation" and "experience," no matter how narcissistic, gives us a vocabulary with which to explore the melancholic's exciting language. Turning to Gunnars, the desire for communion in *The Substance of Forgetting* is the desire for communion with the self, the way the narrator tries to relive the landscape of the affair and all that it repressed so as to create an environment of possibility and intensity. The writer is a reader, too. Kristeva's self-conscious and self-implicating reading performance of Proust runs the dangerous line between solipsism and demonstration. It is most melancholy.

iv. THE LANGUAGE OF LANGUAGE

I thought a landscape is like a language. (52)

The Substance of Forgetting

Kristjana Gunnars

. . . there is no writing other than the amorous . . . (6)

Black Sun

Julia Kristeva

The narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* is concerned throughout with the risks of entering into the act of writing. Her self-conscious approach reflects with melancholy ambivalence on the possibility of representing that which she would like to remember and concurrently the fear she might destroy what it is she is trying to capture. This ambivalence is our window to understanding the correlations between the melancholic's fraught relationship with language and their own peculiar style as both a defense and a lament.

From the start the narrator of *Substance* writes her tale with a breathy sentence structure. She relies on the simplest syntax. Watching people playing on the beach in summer she confesses and performs this style:

> The reason I like to live here is simple. Because this is where people come when they make holes in their lives. Naked patches in busy routines. Holes they can escape through . . . I like the ellipsis in the sentence. The gap in

> the construction. The alarming hesitation. It is so dark in the cracked juncture of my sentence. It is a black hole. An area made naked. (52-53)

Rife with sentence fragments and short, abrupt sentences, her style is ruled by the full stop. The period creates abundant room for breath by creating gaps in the text. As the narrator explains, these gaps or "holes" are the "ellipsis" in the sentence, the place where she "can escape through." Stylistically this is the representation of repression, the places where she falls silent. As Juliet Mitchell points out, "[t]here is an evident lack of continuity in conscious psychic life – psychoanalysis concerns itself with the gaps. Freud's contribution was to demonstrate that these gaps constitute a system that is entirely different from that of consciousness: the unconscious" (2). The narrator of *Substance* writes with resistance and repression, trying not to say something that in the end will "come out all around [her] anyway" (41).

This resistance is on a psychological level a conflict with something she does not want to remember or represent, but it also operates simply on the level of language. The narrator is the embodiment of fatigue and desires "forgetting" (as in the title of the novel), so her first recourse is to attempt it by emptying out language:

> I came to this valley because I wanted all that tension to seep out of the phrases all around me. To uncharge the battery of my language. I was tired. The words were crammed too full. They could not hold the wealth of information and counterinformation I had put there. They were so full that it was impossible to recognize what was in them. I wanted to see the disappointments that had accrued fall like fluff from the branches. To see the naked branches. (50)

The naked branches can be read as an ideal language, a pure language that signifies without ambiguity and that has no history. The narrator's struggle with language and its relationship with memory structures her style and her narrative desire to hold onto the memories of her relationship but also to be free of that desire. The overwhelming of the senses I discussed in the first section of this chapter comes to bear upon the narrator's struggle with language, for if experience demarcates the site of the struggle between the inner work and the attempts to reconcile it with (external) "reality," then language is implicitly part of the struggle and a further exciting cause of its ambivalence.

Ultimately, the "disappointments" and "tension" represent language's failure or inability to successfully mediate the melancholic subject's experience of the world and his or her own reality. This unfortunate truth the narrator finds in language is also in part her fear of language's ability to signify what has been repressed, its role as vehicle for the return of the repressed. The naked branch, as both ideal and tyrannical (infertile) other, then, is a mask of the Other that the narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* both longs for and fears. In language, as in subjectivity, there is something haunting.[22] What is this fatigue, then, but a desire for something other than language's ambiguous offer? Her fantasy of another language is posed through her desire for rest:

> What is a sentence that is at rest? Could I write a sentence that has no tension in it? No elliptical curve from desire to return? A sentence that

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[22] This haunting presence in language is a recurring motif in Gunnars's work: it is in some guises the prowler in *The Prowler*; it is the "good-bye . . . [in] the words that mean to greet [the beloved]" (7) that are like cougars that "lurk in the trees" (7) in *Night Train to Nykøbing*; in *Zero Hour* the threat is the danger of her own language as performative and inauthentic: "[a]ll that happens on the page is theater. Writing is a play. Words are actors, props, singers, dancers. I think of civilization as a great contrivance" (76). In *The Rose Garden* the narrator fears that she "will then be infected with the disease of the book being read. As with all infectious illnesses, she will be caught in its bonds unconsciously" (82). While some of these threats denote a fear of physical harm and others are more psychological, in each case language stands as a potential threat to the subject's existence. The neurotic's existential question is thrown into relief by the subject's relationship with language.

> acknowledges it is tired and wants to rest. The sentence knows what it wants. To rest awhile. A sentence without an Other. Without a lover. Without a desired object. Perhaps even a sentence without a subject. No ego. No narcissistic ego settling its image over the world. (50)

Complicit with the fatigue is a desire to empty language and, ultimately, be freed from desire.

In a turn that emphasizes this desire to be free from desire, the narrator personifies a sentence that "acknowledges it is tired and wants to rest" and imagines it as a "sentence [that] knows what it wants" (50). She personifies language, longs to make it into her Other, an Other "without an Other. Without a lover. Without a desired object" (50). This language as a subject without desire or longing can be read concurrently as an ideal reflection of what she wants to be (independent, desireless) and what she wants language to be (independent, desireless). Thus, it can equally be read as the desire for an Other that does not desire her, so she can avoid or relinquish being a desired object. In either event, this seems to be a fantasy of the end of desire, an end to reminiscences and memory, and the creation of the ability to live in the moment not ruled by longing.

Appearances may be deceiving, however, and the deception might be the point here. When she confesses that she wants to write a sentence that has "No elliptical curve from desire to return," she offers a different window to her desire for a language like 'naked branches.' The proposition is oddly chosen and suggests that a sentence at rest would need some "elliptical curve" to prevent tension returning "from desire." This acknowledges that the tension the narrator perceives in language is in some way connected to her own desire. She does, however, simultaneously want language to be free of desire's tension while she does not directly ask to be free of her own desire. The elliptical curve would allow both freedom (in easing the tension out of language) and the sustaining of desire's delicious restraint. It is, all in all, an ambiguous request for reprieve from language but the continued tension of her own desire. [23]

This ambivalent relationship with language -- even with the aid of fantasy and the tenacity of a desire for something other than her current conditions – is implicitly repressive. Even the proclamation "I am tired' is in itself a refusal to carry on with things as they are -- it is a crossroads, a possible resignation of the failed work of mourning. The fantasy takes that one step further, imposing another narrative over top of the fatigue -- the possibility of naked branches, of clarity and simplicity. In her discussion of *The Prowler*, Cook describes a similar dynamic, where "[o]nce the narrator's definition of love coincides with speechlessness, once again it is replaced by presence, this time in the form of a gift" (23). Speechlessness (read love) is the precondition for repression that leads to the replacement of speechlessness by presence (return of the repressed). The proof of the mechanism of repression at work here ultimately arrives in the abundances already discussed in section one of this chapter: the floods, the plagues of insects, the plethora of fruit. The return of the repressed arrives with a vengeance in the Okanagan.

Yet, what seems most significant about the return of the repressed for Gunnars's narrator is that however abundant it is, it still has a new measure of distance -- even what returns, as significant as it is, still has a distance from the narrator that is more manageable than the burden, the fatigue that defines her at the beginning of the novel. When she and her editor are on the houseboat editing the manuscript, very possibly the manuscript the reader is currently reading as a novel, they debate the title and her editor suggests “Relative Distance” (52). The perspective brought about by speechlessness, then repression, and the return of the repressed, provides just such a distance.

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[23] While writing this section, my doctor discovers my heart has an elliptical curve: extra circuitry that leads it to beat too fast, like I am running even though I am sitting still, drinking tea. It wants to slow down but it cannot, does not know it's going fast. Our bodies, too, have contradictory desires.

The repressed also returns as Other, not as the internal work it was. The desire and complicit fantasy of a sentence “without an Other” (50) circles the question of the addressee, the reader, and her lover -- the writing’s others. One of the central dangers such an ambiguous discourse must navigate in its desire to be received, in its desire for a response, is the other’s interpretation, the other’s desire. Indeed, it is what is sought, but since the object is ambiguous, reception will certainly be as well. Like a letter unaddressed, there is no guarantee that it will be received by the correct party. On the level of writing, the melancholic’s ambiguous and confusing language may not only reach the wrong hands, but might be terribly misread.

Indeed, is it the melancholic’s intent to make sense to only one reader, or to be misunderstood by all others? In Kristjana Gunnar’s long poem *Carnival of Longing*, the narrator similarly fears this level of interpretation:

> all my words may speak another story
> depending on the reading
> a Freudian story, Jungian
> Lacanian, Barthesian, auto-
> biographical story
> when I had not intended to tell
> any story (19)

The narrator here expresses a fear of interpretation, a fear of what a foray into the symbolic can mean, and an awareness that her discourse, despite a desire to hide itself, draws attention to itself, becomes itself an other to psychoanalysis and counter-transference.

The beloved as Other is for *The Substance of Forgetting*'s narrator perhaps her greatest source of anxiety: "he says more with his blue eyes than with his words, yet his eyes are not expressive. They tell me nothing. I am imagining everything" (20). He is even more immediately absent in the Okanagan landscape, and distance makes him a disturbing and unreliable addressee. Even when present, however, she fears "[h]e could be thinking anything. [She] cannot tell what he is thinking" (22). He does not communicate to her what he is feeling and she cannot imagine what it is.

Simultaneously, though, she is fearful that her imagination is filling in the gaps, the places where he has said nothing. She confesses, "I would like to just read his thoughts. Everything he says is beside the point. There is no point . . .I am imagining everything" (20). Three things come from this confession: 1) She takes the status of an unreliable narrator as she confesses that she is "Imagining everything"; 2) she suggests that speech is beside the point; and 3) she admits that she has a fearful awareness of her own narcissism. Ultimately, she confesses the pointlessness of imagining what he is experiencing, and, in the end, defers to her own narcissistic fantasies about the relationship.[24] This seems to be the only tenable way the narrator's love/ hate ambivalence can be supported. As she expressed her desire earlier in the narrative,

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[24] The narrator of *Night Train to Nykøbing* has a similar revelation when she recognizes the beloved "is always an image of [her own] desire" (10).

"Perhaps we can colour reality the way we want to. Perhaps we can deny what we see with our eyes and substitute what we see with our desire"(16).

This lure of fantasy and this giving over to desire lead us back to her anxiety around language and its potential to signify too much. This undermines the truth of her perceptions -- the veracity of what she sees in the valley in the excesses that surround her – but the perception itself and how that truth serves her fear and her anxiety. For it is the perception that motivates repression and simultaneously makes room for the possibility of the return of the repressed. That language is potential, both destructive and creative, makes it the fraught battleground upon which the melancholic can stage his struggle between outside and inside, between what was, and what might still be.

Caught between what she sees in the valley and the memories that weave their way throughout, the narrator is utterly ambivalent. She has confessed that she might have substituted what she can see with what she desires, and this narcissistic relationship on the perceptive level is mirrored by a split perspective in the narrative. As Cook points out about *The Prowler*,

> Prophetic, self-deceiving, and unruly, the text is always curiously doubled in the narrator's story, so much so that she eventually creates a second reader / writer, the one who stands behind "the official author," the one who reads over her shoulder and chastises her: "that is not what you intended to say." In the place of the story being told, another story, "an unexpected story," appears (63). What is this story, this "great surprise," but the love story – the story that is always "somewhere else." (24)

This architecture of the self-conscious writer / reader creates an ambivalence that hovers between silence and metaphor:

> Gunnars's poetic technique is evasive and indirect, since she constructs her writing as both an escape from, and attempt at, meaning. And, as the narrator of *The Prowler* in her guise as reader makes clear, such an enterprise is as pleasurable as it is frightening. (25)

The self-conscious writer / reader carries on a narcissistic conversation about her own narrative and ontological creation, a counter force to the silence which might subsume her. This othering stands in disavowal of, refusal of, and paradoxically in testament to the beloved's absence. This is either constituent to the melancholic's ambivalence and directly the result of incorporation of the beloved object, or it is at least representative of it.

In some sense, then, the narrator's ambivalent sense of language – as it is defined by pleasure and fear – stands in for her ambivalent feelings for the absent beloved. Indeed, as Cook suggests about the narrator of *The Prowler*, "every attempt at self-definition becomes an entrance into a potentially amorous transaction, with a consequent heightening of affect" (27). Similarly, the narrator of *Night Train to Nykøbing* worries at the anxious opening of the novel about the beginning of her letter to the beloved:

> *Dear dear Jan*. But this is not the greeting that says what I want to say. Inside every greeting there is also a farewell. I try to wrest the good-bye out of the words that mean to greet him. Fully, without reservation. But the word will not go. The farewell inside is waiting to spring out. (7)

Oddly, however, a little later in the narrative she takes pleasure from language's excess:

> Yet I cannot help feeling I have never been more sure of the meaning of my words. The words that say I am in love. That I know both meanings are inside what I say, many meanings, opposing each other. It is a full word, *love*. Full of everything we could not say, dared not say, desired to say. (34)

The narrator of *Night Train* vacillates between a fear of language and a pleasure in it in accordance with where she is in relation to the Other, the beloved. So too for the narrator of *Substance*, writing as an act of expression connects her to the amorous affect of the affair. She cannot write without writing to and about the absent beloved.

Seductive and destructive, freeing and burdensome, language is the melancholic's chance to be free of the failed mourning which oppresses and shelters him or her, and yet ultimately provides proof of the external world's destructiveness and the fallibility of all things, all pleasures. At the onset, this is a world of extremes, of love and hate no less, and through exploring these extremes as they present themselves to the narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* this chapter has examined what vicissitudes the melancholic faces with language. Like the landscape surrounding the cottage, language is an inseparable other, a mirror to the ambivalent struggle that consumes the narrator. Language is never more destructive or creative than she wishes it to be. It seems, irrevocably, that style is all.

v. CONSUMED BY LAMENTS

Wallowing is sex for depressives. (26)

Written on the Body

Jeanette Winterson

Maddening and monotonous, the melancholic's laments proceed from the unconscious work that results from the incorporation of the lost other. Previously in this chapter I discussed how the incorporation itself is ambivalent in intent and result. This section of the chapter will explore the relationship language has with that incorporation and the work the melancholic is passionately engaged with. Ultimately, the melancholic is a strange creature, secreting away his own affect and memories, preserving their version of events and paradoxically forsaking the other.

The key to what is occurring in this unconscious work, Freud argues, is the melancholic's increased self-reproach. As truthful as it might seem, with self-denigration, "reality-testing" is both pointless and not the point:

> The essential thing, therefore, is not whether the melancholic's distressing self-denigration is correct, in the sense that his self-criticism agrees with the opinion of other people. The point must rather be that he is giving a correct description of his psychological situation. He has lost his self-respect and he must have good reason for this. (255-256)

What the outside world, what any social context might or might not verify, is moot, for it is the psychological drama it signifies that most betrays the melancholic. There is then an apparent contradiction, wherein the melancholic's affliction cannot be just conceived as a case of exciting cause and result: "It is true that we are then faced with a contradiction that presents a problem which is hard to solve. The analogy with mourning led us to conclude that he had suffered a loss in regard to an object; what he tells us points to a loss in regard to his ego"(256). Both object loss and ego loss: there is a correlative here that reveals how the melancholic secretly and internally deals with loss or the potential for loss.

At what step, then, does the melancholic's work diverge from the mourner's? It seems, ostensibly, to be a question of history. As Freud argues, from there things diverge dramatically:

> an object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then, owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different . . . the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. (257-258)

Where the "normal" result allows the subject to relinquish the lost object and create new cathexes, the melancholic subject refuses to find something or someone new. The melancholic result is defined by retreat and introversion.

This seems in keeping with the inner external landscape the narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* experiences. Indeed, it poses the question that remains unstated and unanswered in *Substance* : why does the narrator retreat to her valley in the first place? As already discussed, the most the narrator can offer us are abstractions, explanations: "I came to this valley because I wanted all that tension to seep out of the phrases all around me . . . I wanted to see the disappointments that had accrued fall like fluff from the branches. To see the naked branches" (50). The desire for an emptier language acts as a veil suggesting events that are not included in the narrative such as the end of the affair with Jules; the narrator refuses to go there. The question, then, is perhaps unanswerable, but more significant for never being asked in the first place.

There are, suspiciously, very few departures or arrivals in *Substance*, so that the moments in the history of the affair which would be most intense in affect are absent, repressed. When they do occur, they are elided. When the narrator tells us she and Jules are "parting . . . their languages touching for the last time"(113-114), Jules disappears:

> There were no words. There could not have been any words. There was nothing to say yet the air was filled with what remained unspoken. Perhaps a clasping of fingers. A touching of elbows. A meeting of lips . . . I went in to get my bag because it was time to go . . . . There was no sign of Jules at the door. He had disappeared into thin air. (113-114)

The narrator's recollections become uncertain, the word "perhaps" staining the entire scene, and the beloved other disappears. And yet, this is not an oversight, but the point of the text's style, its atmosphere. *Substance* is a novel of middles encompassed by a landscape that "requires no stance, no answers" (49) and its cyclical narrative can only unfold without the threat and danger of those repressed scenes. They must return in the unconscious of the valley she retreats to, mediated and at a distance, so that she might deal with them.

The melancholic's laments, his self-deprecating tirade, are directed towards the self while simultaneously directed towards the absent yet incorporated other. What first appeared to be the melancholic's attempts to help love escape extinction at second look are not as noble seeming:

> After this regression of the libido the process can become conscious, and it is represented to consciousness as a conflict between one part of the ego and the critical agency . . . Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live, so does each single struggle of ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it. (Freud, "Melancholia" 267)

The melancholic subject incorporates the loved object, perhaps first for the preservation of love. The romance of the gesture is lost, however, when one sees how the melancholic couples this preservation with disparagement and denigration. For the melancholic, incorporation means generating a replica of the beloved so that one might continue the tirade – the wounded complaint – into the afterlife. Like a pet stuffed after its demise, the beloved, incorporated object stands as a cardboard testament to the life it lived in the narcissistic eyes of the subject.

This dialogue, then, marks the melancholic's self-deprecation as not as simple as it first seemed:

> We perceive that the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego . . . They are not ashamed and do not hide themselves, since everything derogatory

> that they say about themselves is at bottom said about someone else. (257)

This is the drama of the end of romance played out without the other, the blame still delivered, but addressed to the self. Moreover, this is a curiously fraught drama, wherein the subject was predisposed to carry on the drama playing all the parts from the start. The foundation to incorporation is the privileged narcissistic image of the beloved, an image constructed to be consumed. It is half a protective gesture and half a ready-made script with all the parts cast.

The internalization and incorporation of the loved object prolongs its existence in a way, but the anxiety provoked by the exciting cause does not subside -- the work has just begun. The melancholic's self reproach becomes the telling feature of the drama playing itself out in the unconscious. This apparent "diminution in self regard" (254) is an external sign of some internal work going on, though "the inhibition of the melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely" (254). In addition,

> Feelings of shame in front of other people, which would more than anything characterize this latter condition, are lacking in the melancholic, or at least they are not prominent in him. One might emphasize the presence in him of an almost opposite trait of insistent communicativeness which finds satisfaction in self-exposure. (255)

That which has been incorporated refuses to stay internal, and in contradiction to the cessation of interest in the external world, the melancholic's diatribe insistently exposes itself. Whether this self-exposure seeks to maintain the incorporation or attempts to free oneself from the connection to the loved object remains unclear, though it does further emphasize the internal / external colluding I have noted elsewhere.

The Other can never be fully incorporated, so the melancholic is faced with the dilemma: relinquish the object or lose it. The melancholic's style of writing mirrors this fraught internal / external relation to the object. His tirade vacillates between loving and hating the object (wanting to hold onto it and wanting to destroy it) – this is still the neurotic's 'to be or not to be,' only now in a mediated fashion. Freud argues that although the laments "always sound the same and are wearisome in their monotony [they] nevertheless take their rise each time in some different unconscious source" (265-266). Freud compares these different unconscious sources to the work of mourning once more, where, "This characteristic of detaching the libido bit by bit is therefore to be ascribed alike to mourning and melancholia; it is probably supported by the same economic situation and serves the same purposes in both" (266). These melancholy laments seek to detach the melancholic from the incorporated and lost-object -- at their core is the attempt to grieve, to mourn.

Freud describes this paradoxical aspect of the melancholic as "a double vicissitude" and connects it to the melancholic's inherent ambivalence and need for either retribution or restitution:

> After all, the person who has occasioned the patient's emotional disorder, and on whom his illness is centred, is usually to be found in his immediate environment. The melancholic's erotic cathexis in regard to his object has thus undergone a double vicissitude: part of it has regressed to identification, but the other part, under the influence of the conflict due to

> ambivalence, has been carried back to the stage of sadism which is nearer to that conflict. (261)

This sadism cannot exist without the correlative desire to protect, and although the addressee is secretly the other -- the diatribe delivered sadistically towards that other -- it is also first delivered towards the self. Regardless of whether or not the actual content is meant for the other, in order to protect the other the subject stands in as the addressee.

The sadistic impulse turned towards the self serves another function, as Roland Barthes points out in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*:

> Askesis (the impulse toward askesis) is addressed to the other: turn back, look at me, see what you have made of me. It is blackmail: I raise before the other the figure of my own disappearance, as it will surely occur, if the other does not yield (to what?). (33)

The subject's self-punishment and self-degradation stages a humiliation for the other, hoping the other will see what love has done to him or her. The melancholic takes himself hostage, in order to place demands on the other -- demands of retribution or restitution. Beyond all else, it is the eternal return of the beloved, that the melancholic requests in the sadistic / masochistic display of his or her lament. The melancholic asks for an impossibility with a gesture eternally hopeful and full of despair. Incorporation is the ultimate hope, ultimate desire for the return of the repressed. Yet incorporation and repression are not the same processes and do not share the same result. By analogy, the subject plays hard to get by eating the beloved – the process itself flirts with the beloved's returning, but can never provide or permit it.

What prevents mourning is the melancholic's ambivalent structure, for every time a lament attempts to detach the libido, the ego concurrently seeks to maintain its position and its hold on the incorporated object:

> In melancholia, accordingly, countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault. The location of these separate struggles cannot be assigned to any system but the Ucs., the region of the memory-traces of things (as contrasted with word-cathexes). (266)

Uninterested in the outside world, perpetually seeking self-exposure to be rid of the incorporated object, the melancholic is caught between lost and found, perpetually losing and finding the beloved and hated object over and over. Without reprieve, and suspicious of hope in its very structure, grief and love are equally beyond the melancholic's reach, though, ironically his every gesture is amorous.

vi. TOO IMPROPER AND TOO CUMBERSOME

From the first, Kristeva refuses to let *In Search of Lost Time* exist without the author, without Proust, as she invests his metaphors and style with a sadomasochism she argues is inspired by and translated from his own life. Yet, as already noted, her biographical investigations are not, primarily, to prove a particular writing, but to understand the phenomenology of her own reading experience. She argues that there is something in Proust's "rapportive" language, in his very style, which troubles the reader and offers the possibility of a sort of reflective memory play. Similar to the provocative reminiscences in Gunnars' *The Substance of Forgetting*, and similar to the urge to know in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," this infectious memory play and Kristeva's own narcissistic urge to know what occurred on the other side of the text, performs a relationship between the author, the author's life lived, and the novel, as a genre which questions and tries to capture time, all filtered inescapably through one reader's, Kristeva's, desire to participate and to be the desired reader. This section turns to a discussion of how Kristeva constructs Proust's style, his language and representations, as in search of a reader, and indeed as in search of her specifically.

This chapter has lready discussed how primordial sadomasochism (love / hate) structures the style of the work of art, and by extension, inspires the "experience" which provokes Kristeva's reading, her theoretical experience and style. Her peculiar, imaginative and narcissistic reading testifies to and performs the seductive nature of the melancholic's discourse, signifying nothing directly, yet acting as a veil for an unconscious excess. The discrepancy between what the melancholic utters and performs and what must be his or her unconscious reality creates a violence that, as Kristeva argues and demonstrates, affects the reader on an ontological level, through both the idea and the body. Kristeva's reading points to a significant desire-creating force in the discourse:

> Desire consists of drawing loved ones toward yourself, dissolving them in your own perceptions until they become contaminated, unattainable, confused with objects, external, woven in the same fabric, neither inside nor outside, but a continuous chain of sensations – madeleines, tea, hawthorns, pink dresses, blue eyes, or stained glass windows in the Combray church. (187)

Kristeva's style, her performance of the personal "I" and its juxtaposition to her explorations of Proust's personal life, create an intimate arena and identification that contaminates, confuses, and breaks down the barrier between inside and outside. This manic reading permits her to be a part of the melancholic experience. The text provokes melancholia in the reader and can result in a manic or melancholic reading transference. In both events this troubles the boundaries between inside and outside and Kristeva performs this ambivalent response more largely by troubling the relationships between writer, text, and reader.

The foundation for Kristeva's theorizing of rapportive language is built on her construction of the reader as passive, as "caught" and infected:

> The reader is caught. Like Saint Bernard of the Clairvaux, he, too, could say *credo experto*. Indeed, as informal Cistercian monks ourselves, we trace the writer's experience as it permeates his paradoxical language, which proves to be an infectious one, a language that logicians would call

> a "rapportive language." It contaminates us and destroys our own language; no, it rediscovers a language we did not know was our own. (196)

This passivity and susceptibility seem contradictory to the activity I have already noted in Kristeva as a reader as she researched, constructed and dramatized the life Proust lived and how it must have informed his writing. Her justification for such projections permits her to push further here, and legitimize an affinity between reader and author:

> When an utterance referring to an action performed by an agent can be understood only if one has a certain affinity with that agent, it functions as a "rapportive language." Religious utterances, which appeal to and secure the reader's *faith*, rely on this logical mechanism. One must "identify oneself imaginatively" with the subject of the utterance, which can be self-implicating (although it need not be). Self-implicating language is language that is not satisfied with giving information but wishes to express "affects," the "inner self" of the speaker (God, the prophet, or the evangelist). (196)

The sadomasochism that Kristeva theorizes around Proust's own predilections here defines "self-implicating language" and its wish to express affects. Primarily this is Kristeva arguing that she as a reader has a rapportive connection to Proust, that his self-implicating language and its sadomasochistic roots define and explain her readerly affect (her "experience") – she seems a reader in search of authorizing or relief.

If self-implicating language is the result of the speaker seeking to express the "inner self" then the corresponding affect found in the reader must equally be some reflection of the reader's "inner self," and further, perhaps, a result of the reader's desire to represent that inner reality. The previous section looked at Freud's construction of the melancholic's language and its relationship to his inner work and analyzed his sense of the melancholic's unconscious work as similar to mourning, as the subject attempts to relinquish attachments to the other one by one. Kristeva's affective reading has much in common with this process. What she theorizes about Proust's style and the primordial sadomasochism brought on by his relationship with his mother could equally be applied to her and the love / hate relationship she has to Proust's novel. As Kristeva correlates Proust's own lived experience with his desire to write and his style of writing, she concurrently attempts to draw him to her, dissolving him in her perceptions until he becomes contaminated, "a continuous chain of sensations" (188), and essentially of the same sympathetic erogenous body. Her desire is a reading that seeks to incorporate the other, Proust, in a cannibalistic and sadomasochistic turn. So long as it is seeking, however, it is neither inside nor out – incorporation is never entirely successful.

The contradictory and paradoxical side to this desire is an always present sense of doubt. Even as Kristeva gets the most adamant in her construction of the connection between Proust's lived experience and her own reading experience, it seems to require a contradictory aesthetics of doubt, of the present impossibility of the connection she desires –indeed it is the prerequisite of that desire's existence. The "unattainable, confused with objects, external . . . neither inside nor outside"(187) aspect of her connection with Proust is the constant reminder that her desire is a reader's affect, mediated by text and interpretation and never entirely as rapportive or religious as she would like it to be.

Proust's answer to this paradox, Kristeva theorizes, was to slowly sublimate his own body into literature, a sacrifice that Kristeva sees as an extension of his style and its ontological implications:

> Those who knew Proust right before he died were struck by the mystical strength of this transmutation of a body into literature, a change that outweighed the assumed snobbishness, as well as the frequently fetid stench of the friendships he endured. The writer, who devours the world until he can participate in the startling nature of objects and the ridiculous behaviours of society types, allows himself to be poured directly into his work, which takes the place of infinite Being as well as grace. The writer adds a Christlike ambition to the sensualism of the ancient Greeks. The Passion-become-Man is sacrificed to the last remaining cult, the cult of literature, which seems to be the only thing able to lead the Word toward flesh. (194- 195)

It seems odd that Kristeva would on the one hand refer to Proust's "suffocating" and living "without food or sleep" and then on the other hand refer to him as a man "who devours the world" (195), when it really seems that he let the world devour him. Perhaps such an appetite gives further strength to her construction of Proust's sadomasochistic style, constructs an appetite for a reader. She sees his wasting as having a greater goal. Kristeva needs Proust to have a sadomasochistic bent, needs for him to be seeking to disquiet and make the other anxious. If his sublimation was only evidence of an object loss triumphing over him – the flesh made into word to give the other supremacy – then her readerly affect was not desired by Proust. She would be undesired, an interloper.

Her construction of Proust's "mystical" aspects, his "Christlike ambition," all signify a nobility in his decline, a willingness and desire "to be poured directly into his work, which takes the place of infinite Being as well as grace" (195). This nobility lends his style a greater good, and the text an "infinite Being" which comes closer to the reader, to Kristeva herself, as a result. At the beginning of the chapter, she refers to the novel genre with similar religious connotations:

> Proust certainly did not abandon the ambitions of Balzac and Homer – the clearly sociological and fundamentally transcendental ideal of building a world where readers could receive communion as in a sacred space. In this world, they could discover the coherence of time and space they dream of but fail to find in reality. (170)

This communion, like Catholic communion rituals, involves a cannibalistic incorporation of the other, and yet her theorizing of this communion is neutral enough that it is left ambiguous who is devouring whom. This dialectical sense of incorporation interestingly enough leaves the possibility that Kristeva as reader becomes part of Proust's sublime body and equally the possibility that Proust has become a part of Kristeva's voracious body. And yet this ambiguity leaves either uncertain, and incorporation remains something performed but never entirely successful.

What mediates this relationship between author and reader is, though, a particular text with a style which, as Kristeva's complex reading / countertransference relates, provokes through its odd, almost contradictory aesthetic:

> When words become flesh, the violence of excess is added to the subtlety of perception, and the most velvety stylistic melody is disturbed by the

> sadomasochistic nature of the human experience, where it encounters its own degradation and glory along with intensity that sustains it. We prefer to forget this in order to survive, rather than to experience ourselves as living beings. (168)

This combination and juxtaposition of the violence of excess and the subtlety of perception seems to be what distinguishes Proust's style for Kristeva, seems to be what is a prerequisite for the rapportive language she describes. Affect and perception create an implicating drama where the reader, too, feels the impossibility, the inadequacy of the symbolic and the social world in relation to the melancholy affect.

Mourning and melancholia might have the same fascination, but where the work of mourning bit by bit detaches the libido from the lost object, the melancholic does not have it so easy. As Freud points out, "melancholia contains something more than normal mourning. In melancholia the relation to the object is no simple one; it is complicated by the conflict due to ambivalence" (266). Where Freud is at a loss is in explaining whether the ambivalence is constitutional or just about 'the threat of losing the object" (266), psychoanalytic theorists after Freud, from Klein to Kristeva and Hassoun, argue that melancholia is a failed mourning. As Michael Vincent Miller points out, "The melancholic's tragic flaw is that he never learned to mourn" (xxii). The mechanisms typically available to the subject in the work of mourning are either absent or ineffectual in the melancholic's similar stuggle to detach the libido. The same fascination and repetition exist between the two, but in the melancholic the work seems unending. This unending work, it is not hard to imagine, seems the fuel and motivation for *In Search of Lost Time*.

vii. "LOST IN THE CIRCLES OF ITS OWN CIRCUMFERENCE"

> A dweller in truncated time, the depressed person
> is necessarily a dweller in the imaginary realm. (61)
>
> *Black Sun*
>
> Julia Kristeva

From the start, the narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* is operating under a title that raises the specter of time. Remembering and forgetting, it becomes clear in the novel, are ways of manipulating the chronology of narrative and the time of being. The unnamed narrator has moved to the Okanagan, a landscape where she can be alone with her memories, where she wonders, "perhaps we can deny what we see with our eyes and substitute what we see with our desire" (16) -- she has a cabin in the imaginary realm. As the narrative progresses and the repetitions become clearer, more pronounced, time as a seductive place and a destructive force in the imaginary life of the melancholic becomes clear.

There is no real time in *Substance*, only melancholic time: the events occur in an emotional and psychological order, not according to any clock. The first section, an unnamed prologue, locates us in the present tense of the valley in winter, while Chapter One maintains the present tense even though it is a recollection.[25] Chapter Two moves back to the valley while Chapter Three returns to Jules and the landscape of the affair, but this time using the incomplete past tense before seguing to a dream. "Real time" or time measured against the clock is the luxury of the Symbolic. Partly lost to the Imaginary realm, the melancholic is certain to have an issue with "real time," or any time for that matter.

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[25] Though the narrator uses the present tense, it is how she enters into the chapter that betrays her. She first remembers that Jules said, "You are beautiful, madame" (15) and then sets the stage for her reminiscences:

Real time, or the chronologically-true narrative is something that returns to the narrator again, and again preoccupies her. At the core, her fixation seems to be not with the events themselves as they appear in a narrative such as her own, but instead with what events in a series conspire to make real:

> Perhaps everything I have been thinking runs into pain. Pain and loss . . . Perhaps all stories run into chaos. No matter how well constructed, how well organized, all stories end in chaos. In disaster. Life itself ends in disaster. (59-60)

For the melancholic narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting*, there is an implicit fear of where a traditional narrative might lead. She fears "pain and loss" and the likelihood that even her own story will "end in chaos."

As already discussed, what the melancholic narrator of *Substance* cannot face emotionally is repressed and returns in the chaos of the valley. Each word written risks representation, engages a discourse with the Other, the absent beloved. Language is a source of both pleasure and fear for her and the breathless style employed is both representative and repressive. These two ruling forces of pleasure and fear also structure

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"I would like to begin with that. You are beautiful, madame. Just like that. Those words must be spoken in semidarkness. The lights are off. It is night" (15). These are stage directions, attempts to recreate what she remembers.

the repetitive and circular narrative of the text. Keefer argues that the similar style of *The Prowler* is pastiche:

> When I register its short, direct declarative sentences, its sharp transitions, its leaps from memory to desire, I can't help thinking of Marguerite Duras; a work like *The Lover*. Duras speaking not through the heat and languor of Indochina, but the bleakness of Iceland; not of eros but tuberculosis. (53)

Keefer goes on to describe the style of writing as moving "[a]bruptly, elliptically, by way of declaration, not accretion" (53). On the narrative level the text is composed not only of chapters, but also by the gaps between the chapters, between what is said and what is not said. The narrative moves from temporal moment to temporal moment, each time repressing some aspect of the story. The narrator reaches for the absent beloved at the same time she retreats to the valley, seduces the reader with the possibility of a narrative that might hold together the reminiscences and create a "true' story, while it equally might just lead to disaster.

The narrator's fear and resistance to traditional narratives plague her most evidently in the recurring motif of trains and tracks. Typically the symbol in Canadian literature and culture of unification and the possibility of reaching the West, of possibility, in *The Substance of Forgetting* those very qualities make the train a dangerous beast:

> We are riding the rails of the dead end. The train will have no brakes. The tracks will continue until they stop and there will be no warning of their ending. They might stop at the edge of a cliff. The story will be a cliff-

> hanger. The train will go over the cliff at full speed. All the cars will disassemble in flight. The ground below will be littered with train wreckage. Attempts at body counts will be made. But the bodies will no longer be recognizable. Identities cannot be certified. Relatives will be warned against visiting the site. Ropes will be strung around the wreckage. Officials will look bewildered. They will claim ignorance. *We did not know it ended there. How could we know that the tracks were like that?* (60)

The narrator paints a vivid and detailed picture of destruction and where a story can lead to a bad end. Yet, more than a possibility here, she makes it a vivid reality, betraying not just fear but fascination and perhaps even jouissance in the destruction. Indeed, whatever proceeds this image of chaos and destruction, it will inescapably be tied to it and remain as a specter both horrific and compelling.[26]

Similarly, the narrator and her lover Jules, while walking on the train tracks at the edge of the midwestern American town that is the landscape of their relationship, both tell stories of people who have been killed, run down by trains, and she reflects that,

> the landscape was empty. Only the two of us. I was thinking I wanted nothing after this. To walk on these tracks endlessly. To follow the wooden bars and spikes as far as they went. This was a break in the

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[26] In *Night Train to Nykøbing* the narrator is transported away from the beloved by a train, and the memory of the departure is revisited throughout the text. In the final pages, the narrator succumbs to a drug given to her by one of her colleagues who has told her, "This is my solution for you" (72). She falls to the floor and has a terrible imagining: "He and I, my lover and I, were inside . . . There was a child with us . . . Just then a train sped into view . . . It dawned on me, only too late, that the train was taking us away" (94). In *Night Train*, too, trains are motifs of the threat of time and chronology. Just as the narrator is aware that "[i]nside every greeting there is also a farewell"(7), the narrative and language of the entire text is a disavowal and resistance of that inevitable and metonymic departure on the train platform.

> continuum of our lives. Unplanned, unofficial. We had escaped and no one knew where we were. (69)

With the image of the tracks here is the urge to "walk on . . . endlessly," the possibility of a story that will go on and on and lead the two of them away from the frozen landscape of the affair. This promise is followed immediately by a corresponding fear, like an answer to her question of the possibility: "In the distance I saw a bright light emerging from the haze. It must be the light of a train approaching"(69).

Later in the hotel room, she describes the light of the street lamp outside the window and confesses, "I buried my face in his chest. I did not want to see the light of the streetlamp blasting in on us. The light was coming closer and closer and I did not want to look" (72). The train light here begins to signify the coming end to their relationship and her desire to ignore that end, to pretend it is not happening. And yet she is aware that it could have even ended earlier:

> [O]ur lives might have turned out differently. If he had kissed me on the railroad track we would have forgotten ourselves in the moment. We would not have seen the headlights, The train would have mown us down at that moment. It might have been the kiss of death. (73)

The carnival must end and the affair cannot find its excess without a time limit, a fallability, a mortality. The melancholic's sense of this mortality imbues all that is significant with extra meaning, makes a carnival out of what it fears to lose, but cannot attain that *jouissance* without the inevitable loss.

The narrator's sense of endings shapes her narrative in the present tense, but she can recollect a time, with Jules, when they could walk together on roads and the chronology was different:

> But here in the American Midwest things happen one at a time. One after the other, one step ahead of the other. A chronological progression that somehow seems unnatural. Jules was with me and he was talking and I was thinking it was unnatural that all things should not be happening at once here too. Everything I imagined in the past and will imagine in the future. That it all should be happening as we stepped from tie to tie on the track. (89)

This linear sense of time that defines the landscape of the affair is alien to them both. The sense of time that Jules describes where all things happen at once, is similar to the sense of time that the narrator experiences in the valley, where she remembers things in a circular and repetitive fashion.[27]

The narrator's style of remembering – a sense of time where "everything happen[s] at the same time" (89) – relies on excess and repetition. Freud, as already discussed in the second section of this chapter, imagines that the melancholic's "laments which always sound the same and are wearisome in their monotony nevertheless take their rise each time in some different unconscious source" (265-266). For Freud the repetitions are testament to an unconscious connection, and the monotony should not mislead us into thinking there is just one unconscious source, but make us recognize that each lament is representative of a larger network of links that connect the subject to that unrepresentable incorporated loss.

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[27] Another reading of these contrasting landscapes could be that the excessive valley is the return of everything that had to be repressed by the bleak Midwest landscape of the affair.

In *The Substance of Forgetting*, the narrator's repetitions occur in both her language and her narrative. The most distinct repetition, in terms of the narrator's style of language, is her repeated remarks about being tired that occur four times in the novel. On the first page in the prologue she writes, "I would say I am tired. I thought I could hardly get more tired and then I did" (11). Then, about halfway through the text she repeats the line, "I would say I am tired" (78). A little further on, she repeats herself with a small difference: "I know there is all this work to be done and I know I am tired. I think I can hardly get more tired and then I do" (109). Finally, near the end of the text she repeats herself once more: "I would say I am tired. Winter has been long and spring has been slow"(124). Each time there is the repetition of the lament, "I am tired," and all four occasions fall between the seasons Winter and Spring. The recurring lament spans the entire present-tense narrative and defines the general mood of the text.

What lies beyond the repetition of the lamentation "I am tired," can be found in the context of the complaint – each occurrence is a repetition with a difference. In the prologue, the lament is surrounded by fog and the last traces of winter:

> There is so much fog in the valley that I cannot see the lake below the house. When I look up the mountain into the pine trees they are bathed in the milk-white dream of the mist. The tops of the trees are lost in cloud.

> We have been dreaming too much, the forest and I . . . . Jack pines push onto the road and the ponderosas stand spread with upward bending limbs as if conducting dreams I dream in the mist (11-12)

The narrator's fatigue finds its context in the dream-like landscape where she and the forest are connected, the landscape mirroring her less conscious state.

When she next remarks on her fatigue the fog has been replaced by rain and clouds and the narrator's reminiscences wear upon her:

> The clouds were so tired. They lowered themselves into the valley between the hills and went to sleep. They are laden with rain. They are full of sorrow. They are too heavy for themselves. (78)

This second mention of fatigue is coupled with a strong sense of sorrow, even despair, as she notes through pathetic fallacy that her sorrow is too heavy for her.

The third occurrence of the lament immediately precedes a hopeful (future tense) note: "I think the spring will come with blossoms and I will rest in the sun" (109). That she "thinks" spring will come still does not make this a resounding, hopeful claim. She does, however, also add, "I know there is all this work to be done and I know I am tired" (109). This acknowledgement of work, however despairing, signifies some relationship to the real world outside the valley – the world of work and social responsibility. So within the context of this third occurrence of the lament there is an ambivalence, partly hopeful, partly despairing still, as the narrator complains, "I think I can hardly get more tired and then I do" (109). She has not succumbed to the sorrow that was "too heavy" the last time she mentioned it, but the ambivalence at this stage seems to make her even more tired.

With her last expression of fatigue she repeats the lament in an ambiguous tense: "I would say I am tired"(124). The lament here almost anticipates a "but" or at least indicates some sense of doubt. The fatigue is accompanied by a frustration with how "[w]inter has been long and spring has been slow"(124), and this frustration indicates a strong desire to be done with the heavy sorrow of winter and find something else in spring. Immediately following that, she indicates a new perspective on work, or the world waiting: "I no longer know what I have to do. Work that is made for me piles up. I have confused it with work I want to do" (124). This last lament is still ambivalent, but here the ambivalence has shifted to a perspective caught between unknowing on the one hand and the ability to differentiate what she wants – she has some sense of an active desire, no longer just an objectless hope or anticipation for something new.

By closely reading these four contexts reveals that although the lament has a similar affective content, the context each time indicates different locations in relation to that fatigue. The melancholic narrator's lamentations have a certain monotonous style, yet the repetitions cloak the work that the context reveals. The repetition of the lament draws attention to the narrator's emotional state, yet runs the risk of emptying out the language, moving the complaint to no longer signify. Ultimately, though, what is created in the text is an accumulation. The laments are clues placed four times and even though the incurred monotony may detract from rather than entice the reader's desire, the lament does pose a question of what lies behind it, what content it hides – the repetition marks each claim of fatigue as some small piece in a larger work being done.

This contradiction between the static nature of the lament and the changing context is explained more by the narrator's recurring fixation with the paddle wheeler that she and her friends Roberta and Justine stumble across: "The boat, we were told, used to paddle the lake from end to end. It would carry things from Penticton to Kelowna and back" (74). The boat's purpose and its circling route are a metaphor for the narrator's own repetitive style of remembering, and the very metaphor created through repetition shows us the anchoring purpose of the "I am tired" repetition. The metaphor created through accumulation provides the illusion of something static in a sea of change, something that lacks a definable end – repetition resists the end point, how all runs into chaos.

Where chaos, however, provides a threat, the control of the repetition also carries its own threat. The narrator notes that the paddle-wheel boat no longer traverses the same path, that "[n]ow the boat paddles in circles for tourists. It is without direction. Lost in the circles of its own circumference" (75). In this observation is a fear that she herself might get lost in her reminiscences, and that they might lead to nothing.[28] This fear of nothing is connected to a fear she expresses a little later in the text about the nature of her circling around her memories of the relationship with Jules:

> "Do you have a technique for walking on the tracks?" he asked bemused.
>
> "No."
>
> I had no technique for anything. I do not think there will be enough repetitions to develop a technique. There are only circles and every circle strikes you as new. You do not remember having done this before. (89-90)

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[28] In *The Rose Garden*, the narrator and her lover ride a carousel: "Sitting on the wooden horse, holding the pole with my left hand, I found it suddenly absurd: going around in circles in Strasbourg . . . He was on another horse lower down: when I looked down he was laughing. I was laughing. It was the laughter of being caught in the charms of a disengaged language" (37-38). Both the image of the carousel and the paddlewheeler in *Substance* represent the circular and circling motion of their narrators' styles.

This is the obverse of the fear that the circling might lead to losing herself in the circling, for this is a fear that the circling might lead to nothing, that chaos or monotony will prevail. Similarly, in *The Rose Garden*, the narrator returns to the image of Narcissus throughout her narrative, fearful that his fate might become hers. She wonders if it was "because he reflected too much, or because he was too melancholy, that Narcissus became a flower" (11). Melancholia's self-reflection, its narcissism, hides a hidden threat for the narrator, like the tree that collapsed under the weight of its own fruit.

The threat she faces never reaches a climax or turning point though, and this is testament to the prevalent mood of fatigue. Gunnars's other prose works employ very similar narrative structures and *Night Tràin to Nykøbing* in particular struggles between numerous moments in the timeline of a long distant relationship, something thematically and dynamically similar to *Substance*. The most prevalent difference is the level of anxiety present in *Night Train*. In that novel, a cliff-hanger style is used cutting between timelines: the narrator is given drugs by a colleague so that she would "feel better" (93); at the same time she also recollects a Christmas trip to Copenhagen in which she gets lost in Frederiksborg Castle, like "[s]omething out of a dangerous tale" (74). There are also two climactic arrivals that bracket the departure in the first pages: when her lover calls and says "*It's time now . . . We can't put it off any longer*. We need to be together"(77); and the second and closing arrival, when the lover senses he is losing her, "Two days later he was on a British Airways flight that landed in Vancouver at five in the evening" (89). The narrative cuts away from each plot line at suspenseful moments, creating anxiety and a much greater sense of threat and fear than the similar style of *Substance* does. This is partly the result of the larger number of reminiscences, and partly because of the stylistic cutting away at suspenseful moments. Where anxiety prevails in *Night Train*, desire prevails in *Substance* and this is a testament to the safe solitude of the valley that allows her to move from the fog in the prologue to the clarity she experiences in the last chapter where "the air is clear and all the stars are visible" (124).

What ultimately differentiates the landscape of the affair with its linear time and the landscape of the valley with its sense of time all at once is the luxury of time reified in the figure of the beloved, in Jules. The other, it appears, defines the end point and the duration:

> A sign that says NO U TURN. But there is no You to turn to. Nothing to forbid. Nothing to warn about. No consequences. Only the mellow drops of rain . . . . All runs into chaos. The sky, the clouds, the woods, the water. Soon they will be indistinguishable. I will be unable to tell them apart. There will be rain on my hands. My hair. My arms and face. I will be unable to see where the tracks are going or whether a train is coming or not. The bright light in front will not be visible until it is too late. (60-61)

Her fear rewrites the memory of the two of them walking on the tracks and creates a hybrid scene that is a combination of her current psychological landscape (the lack of clarity in the valley) and her past (the landscape of the affair). The danger of where their story would lead when they were in the present-tense of it now stands in for the narrator's current fear of where he reminiscences might lead. The hybrid memory illustrates the risky situation the narrator finds herself in, caught between two time frames.

Ambivalent in the end, she opts for a mediated and round-about path of representation and witnessing similar to what Cook finds in *The Prowler*:

> Yet I do not think Gunnars is attempting that fraught impossibility to write the female body 'directly' in écriture feminine; instead she is emphasizing the priority of presence. In much the same way that Jacques Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, has distinguished between metaphysical presence, what he calls "the time of the breath" and the secondary fall into writing (18), Gunnars, in this perambulatory love story, recalls the prior claims of presence whenever speechlessness threatens to become intolerable. (22)

Cook looks at *The Prowler* and the narrator of that text's silence and the way her body speaks what she cannot or will not.[29] Whatever the narrator of *Substance* is not saying insists itself and her own "priority of presence" through the chaos and excess around her in the valley. [30]

What she represses and what returns so strongly towards the end of the narrative is her own fallibility and the spectre of failure and defect:

> The universe is a defect. I myself am a defect. The cosmos would be purer without me. And that is what I am trying to say. I am trying to say it is the defect that matters. You know you exist because there is a break, a problem. (111)

The narrator draws a correlation here between the defect and existence, the break in reality. The clarity she evokes can not integrate this defect the way the excess could; the carnival of excess creates a rupture in the pure universe where difference and the defect of being can be imagined. This break, she later sees as *jouissance*,

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[29] In an odd combination of her own desire for presence and an unconscious intertextuality with Derrida's "time of the breath," the narrator of *The Rose Garden* seeks to explain her reading experience with Proust's text as "a poetry of breathing" (46).

[30] Similarly, John Moss in *The Paradox of Meaning: Cultural Poetics and Critical Fictions* describes the structure and style of *The Prowler* and argues that "Gunnars accedes to the function of art as an expression not of the intellect but of intuition, not of the body politic or the body aesthetic, religious, or otherwise transcendent, but of the body itself, her own presence in the world" (192).

> because it is the place of *jouissance* that is censored yet binding. Only your moments of pleasure can stand for the string that holds the grapevines up for the sun to see. It is *pleasure as that which binds incoherent life together*, Jacques Lacan said. All my incoherent years are held up by the pleasure of being here. (117)

Her pleasure in the excess of the landscape of the Okanagan, her pleasure in what was censored by the landscape and environment of the affair, for all its chaos and excess *is* her pleasure, and it is that pleasure which binds her to herself.[31] This is an affirmation of the melancholic's identity: ambivalent, contradictory, censored, and excessive.

The valley, where she is in retreat from the romance, follows a different set of rules. As she notes later in the narrative, "It is a landscape that requires no stance, no answers" (49). This has something to do with the measure of time there, where,

> [t]he frozen water, the crystal-packed soil, the ice-rained jack pines would have us think there is no time. Just a slow succession of light and darkness of concern to no one. There is nowhere to go. No obligations remain. Even the train that whistles as it rounds the corner of Kalamalka's south end is silent and seems not to have any errands in the mountains anymore. (14)

The anxious landscape of the mid-western town, of the romance, contrasts with the landscape of her retreat and solitude where there are no deadlines, no pressures to decide anything. The lack of hellos or goodbyes in the novel supports the foggy and un-anxious mood of the valley. The linear sense of time and the trope of destruction and chaos from the decided path of things might be a metaphor for her awareness, at the time, of the fact that the affair was only meant to have a short shelf life.

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[31] The narrator of *The Rose Garden* similarly states that Proust's narrative provided her "with a consistency [she] could string the discordant days on, and it would feel like [she]had a place from which to measure all other activity" (115).

The narrator's emphasis that "every circle strikes you as new" and "you do not remember having done this before" reveals the significance of "forgetting" which appears so prominently in the title, and yet has not seemed as ostensible a part of the narrative as remembering has. The desire to forget articulates the shift from the past-tense narrative of the affair to the present-tense narrative in the valley. It inevitably and paradoxically runs up against its counterpart the desire to remember, which leads the narrator and us back to the affair once more –these are the rhythms of the narrator. Forgetting can only be that which the narrative resists until it returns to the landscape the next time. In the end it is also, in some unquantifiable way, that which might never be recovered, sensed only metonymically in the chaos and excess of the valley.

What forms out of this conflict between repetition and chaos is the double sense of time that the melancholic performs and desires. What fatigue does, for the unnamed narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting*, is double work: it provides the illusory static "I am tired" which recurs unchanging, and it permits or cloaks the work being done around the lament, the context for its recurrence. To some extent, then, the melancholic's work requires a contradictory perspective on time, where it is necessary to maintain something static which permits the necessary working through.

In the valley, after the fact, the narrator is left with only her fatigue, and the slowness of time might be the product of the absence of a definable Other or a symptom of her melancholic longing. At this stage of the narrative, she characterizes her own progress as blindness and an inability to distinguish between distinct aspects of the landscape. Here the rain becomes a melancholic trope for that which impedes "reality testing" and envelopes the narrator in a journey without perspective, just a blind insistence on its own being. She is left with only the choice to stand still or blindly proceed. Repetitions are her only way to make a trail of breadcrumbs in the blinding rain. She confesses, paradoxically, "I live here because I can repeat myself as often as I desire. Nothing will come of all my repetitions" (116). This paradox is necessary to the melancholic, for there cannot be too much faith in the repetitions; they must appear fallible, too.

Circling and repetition provide a counterbalance to the linear line of train tracks and their sense of inevitability and promise of an end point. While "nothing will come of all [her] repetitions" (116), a too linear narrative will lead to chaos and destruction. The melancholic, it seems, must trust neither and yet must evoke the possibility of both. The space in between is the space of jouissance. Caught between competing dramas of loss and destruction, the melancholic struggles to find an equilibrium bearing pleasurably up under the excessive work of desire and fear. Surviving this drama of oblivion and chaos, the melancholic casts him or herself as a tragic hero, fighting the pointless fight to the end.

viii. VICISSITUDES OF TIME

The double sense of time that recurs in *The Substance of Forgetting* – the "I am tired" and its changing context – is comparable to Freud's observations on the melancholic's "double vicissitudes." This strong ambivalence, in both contexts, leads us back to a discussion of the melancholic's internal work, and his or her desire for incorporation in the first place. Freud explores melancholic time on two fronts, first wondering about the duration of the affliction from the perspective of the analyst or those around the melancholic and then, second, exploring the melancholic's own unique perspective on time. These contrasting perspectives serve to differentiate sensed time and real time as the melancholic experiences them. Indeed, this chapter has already discussed how reality testing is also for the melancholic a question of time testing, synchronizing watches, if only to prove that he or she exists in an affective space outside of time. From the perspective of the analyst, the defining difference between melancholia and mourning is that "We rely on [mourning] being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful"(252). The same is not true of the melancholic, however, who seems unable to relinquish that which consumes him or her.

Duration is a minor concern compared to the troubling and disturbing style of the melancholic's monotonous pronouncements, as discussed in the previous section. In the counter-transference, though, it is curious to extrapolate what effect monotony and repetition have on the analyst or those around the melancholic. Perhaps, like the repeated sounding of a word, this repetition makes the word seem meaningless and not itself. In a similar case, Kristeva remarks in *New Maladies of the Soul* on her analysand Didier's "guarded words . . . delivered in a monotone" (10). In an oddly revealing moment, she confesses that

> [a]t times, I found the paradox of the situation laughable or even absurd. I had a hard time remembering that Didier was "my patient," since I was completely convinced that he spoke for the sole purpose of ignoring me. (10-11)

Though not exact, the similarity between Didier's speech and the melancholic's lament can help us extrapolate what counter-transference the melancholic incurs or perhaps even seeks. Kristeva's sense that Didier is "ignoring" her and her difficulty "remembering that [he] was "[her] patient" implies that Didier's discourse unseats the analyst. The key to this seems to be the manner in which Didier apparently ignores Kristeva – desired or not, his discourse provokes desire in her, the desire to be recognized. Similarly, Kristeva's reading countertransference with Proust in "The Experience of Time Embodied" forgets its position as reader and desires to be recognized. There is something in the melancholic's style of complaint that is compelling and disturbing.

Freud discusses the melancholic's laments – his self-disparaging litany – and reflects on the analyst's relationship to such an analysand:

> It would be equally fruitless from a scientific and a therapeutic point of view to contradict a patient who brings these accusations against his ego. He must surely be right in some way and be describing something that is as it seems to him to be. Indeed, we must at once confirm some of his statements without reservation. (255)

For Freud, the melancholic's litany of self-accusation refuses any scientific or therapeutic contradiction. It is a discourse that seems not to need witness, and yet, curiously, Freud adds at the end of the above quotation, 'we must at once confirm some of his statements without reservation" (255). It is with a peculiar urgency and absoluteness that Freud as analyst responds. He, like Kristeva, is not immune to the melancholic's discourse.

One of the exciting causes for this countertransference is analysis's desire for the cure, for change in the analytic relationship. There is a time element to the analytic session, to analytic interpretation, that requires change, and the specter of progress measured both for the analysand's hope in the transference and the analyst's willingness to continue the analysis in the counter-transference. The melancholic's monotonousness and repetition undo the required progress of knowing. The time of analysis, it seems, is predicated on an implicit map involving "cure" and steps towards that, and the monotonous introversion of the melancholic resists that. As with the anxious metaphor of trains in *The Substance of Forgetting*, the melancholic must resist this time of analysis as it embodies the lapse of time and, by extension, the eventual loss of the beloved. Progress means loss.

In some way, the melancholic must want this frustration in the other, in analysis or the social context of friends or family. This drama, in part, affirms and reinstates the incorporation of the beloved. The melancholic proves he or she is right to incorporate the beloved against the threat involved in "progress" and time lapse. If the melancholic were really a mourner, he should have relinquished the loss in time or triumphed over it in a manic turn.

These contrary attempts to ignore and solicit anxiety or desire in the other lead us to explore the melancholic's own subjective sense of time. First and foremost, one could extrapolate that if one of the affective results of the melancholic's speech in an audience is a frustration with stasis and the undoing of time's progression, then it must be the same for the melancholic. The melancholic must in some way experience his or her own speech in a similar fashion, yet with a pleasure in the preservation of the beloved that the other cannot experience and does not have access to. Except that, as already discussed, the melancholic incorporates the lost object precisely to protect against the loss of that object. To preserve and maintain the moment is to live in the past. The melancholic's monotonous speech, then, seems part of this attempt to stop time, to keep the inevitable loss from occurring. The melancholic, it would seem, has a lot at stake in keeping the analyst and any ideology of change or progress away from the incorporated object.

The melancholic's laments, though, are more than the sum of their monotony. If one of the other ways the melancholic preserves the lost object is through his or her diminution in self regard then, as Freud observes, this is not a simple accusation but an attempt to capture the past. "He is not of the opinion that a change has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better"(254) – the melancholic's revisionary urges extend from his hold on the present to encompass the past. In a peculiar turn, to argue that I / he "was never any better," is to argue that I / he will never be any better. By capturing and altering the past tense to mirror the present moment, the melancholic secures the future tense to mirror the present as well: if he has never been any better than this moment, then he never *will be* either.

ix. TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND SUBLIMATION

> The experience of eros is a study in the ambiguities of time. Lovers are always waiting. They hate to wait; they love to wait. Wedged between these two feelings, lovers come to think a great deal about time, and to understand it very well, in their perverse way. (117)
>
> *Eros the Bittersweet*
>
> Anne Carson

The unconscious has no time and yet has a profound effect on time as a result. The melancholic's vicissitudes from conscious to unconscious life make him or her a subject of time in every sense. In *Time and Sense*, Kristeva argues that, "While the goal of fiction is to create a world, the only world is that of memory" (193). In *The Substance of Forgetting* the unnamed narrator searches through repetitions and her reminiscences to confront what she has repressed. Freud theorizes the unconscious workings of the melancholic as possibly predisposed to melancholia, as possessing a constitutional ambivalence and this is very apparent in Gunnars's narrator's narrative. This section will look at Kristeva's theory of "transubstantiation" and theorizing of the novel's sense of time in *Time & Sense*, in order to better understand the melancholic's desire to write and preserve time.

Kristeva's preoccupation, from the first, is the same as Proust's: the question of time in the novel. She argues that, "The search for time becomes a search for a volume in which the drama of the selves can be played out" (190). Within this literary space she sees the potential for a temporal distortion that promises something to the reader:

> By crossing through the world and through other people to regain their places within a conflict-ridden self, the literary work depicts "a place in Time which is perpetually being augmented" . . . This "augmented place," which we feel and which may be inaccessible, but which is constantly promised to us, is presented by the preposition we find in the title of the work, a preposition that indicates continual movement: "*A la recherche*"--we are always *in search*. In this way, the place remains an open one, and it is not closed off within the revolution of selves--it is "*time embodied*"(191).

This continually augmented place, a literary place if you will, is what propels the melancholic to language. Both silence and writing offer the potential of this augmented space, the potential for time embodied, yet neither silence nor writing, for Gunnars's melancholic narrator, seem to offer resolution, just temporary respite.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how death and the mortal threat upon the beloved object define the boundaries of the symbolic and lead to the excessive burdening of metaphor – the discrepancy between what is said and the unconscious drama that absorbs the melancholic. The narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* is fascinated with how "all stories end in chaos. In disaster" (60), and how the motifs of railroad tracks and trains signify a fear of linear time and real-time chronology. The narrator's circular storytelling, repetitious and non-linear, demonstrates a resistance to the imperatives of real-time as it represents and foreshadows the loss of the beloved – it is an avoidance of the end time of linear narrative. Similarly, Freud's analysis of the melancholic's repetitions and monotonous discourse reveals how, imperceptibly, each repetition corresponds to a different unconscious working – the melancholic's speech is circular, but not necessarily a vicious circle.

The melancholic's resistance is two-fold: the conflict between the signifier and the sadomasochistic content symbolizes a resistance to the day-to-day life of metaphors – for they cannot in and of themselves signify the truth beyond themselves -- and the resistance to linear time. In Proust's style, there is a similar resistance to time; indeed, as Kristeva argues,

> Proustian time X-rays a memory (painfully as well as blissfully) in a sensuality that is clearly infinite or infinitesmal . . . the duration of time becomes fragmented, diverse, disparate. And unified. This Proustian notion of temporal duration has been bequeathed to humankind, and it enables us to name the irreconcilable fragments of time that are pulling us in all directions more fervently and dramatically than ever before. (168)

Proust's style of exploring the sensual minutiae of a memory, of exploring its every aspect, Kristeva argues, leads to a contradictory experience of time. Proustian time is "fragmented" and yet "unified," "named" and yet "irreconcilable." Proust's attention to detail and the sensual life of things slows down the manner in which time is perceived.

Yet, what gives Proust's narrator's remembrances force is the nature and intensity of his own desire. The desire to be tucked in by one's mother becomes, in the narrator's remembering, an epic moment wherein the child's love and hatred of a mother who might never come engulfs him and the reader. This, indeed, as Kristeva argues, is a specific love:

> Time can only be truly regained if it recuperates this sort of violence – a violence that is essentially one of archaic loss and vengeance. What gives me pleasure and abandons me also kills me, yet I am capable of putting to death that which gives me pleasure. (181)

This love / hate is the same primordial sadomasochism explored previously in the general discussion of Freud's construction of the melancholic's experience. The attention to sensual detail, when coupled with this primordial sadomasochism, creates a conflict between how things are perceived and their affective content or what is symbolized beyond them. Just as there is a connection between *The Substance of Forgetting*'s narrator's fearful attraction to how linear things end in chaos (force) and her circling remembrances (resistance), Kristeva perceives a similar attention in Proust to a fear of the affective content – the primordial sadomasochism and its potential to both derive pleasure from the other and ultimately destroy the other – and his accompanying resistance to time through his attention to the minutiae of the moment – the possibility, however slim, that the details will stall the future.

The flood of details, the sadomasochistic desire to hold onto and kill the mother, meet with a third dimension of remembrance, which Kristeva describes as a cubist mirror:

> The narrator's perception of Albertine had always appeared rather incoherent and disparate in the cubist mirror his love held up to her, as if it were framed by different points of view or determined by various sensory

> organs offering divergent impressions. What is more, mourning, along with the variable nature of desire that wastes away before it completely disappears, accentuates the fragmentation that marks *The Fugitive*: "But it was above all that fragmentation of Albertine into many parts, into many Albertines, that was her sole mode of existence in me." (187)

Across time and place, altering even in perspective, this is more than just a collection of remembrances; this cubist mirror is the place where fantasy and memory meet. The "disparate" and "incoherent" aspects Kristeva refers to, and her argument that the various perceptions seem "determined by various sensory organs," all point to an aggressive function in Proust's narrator who is not just subject to and victim of to his own remembrances, but in fantasy is reaching out to perspectives on the beloved that he never possessed.

This space between memory and fantasy emphasizes the close proximity of the two mechanisms. Kristeva's own fantasy-reading of Proust's past, his desire to write *In Search of Lost Time*, and her ultimate wish to be the privileged reader is itself testament to how memory and fantasy might come to one another's aid. Indeed, Kristeva's process of seeking out proof in the literature of Proust's real life desires and anxieties is her own attempt to construct a cubist mirror of Proust, though perhaps not as diverse or divergent as Proust's of Albertine.

Both Gunnars's narrator and Kristeva seem subject to their own reminiscences, caught between fantasy and memory.In *The Substance of Forgetting*, the excesses surrounding the narrator in the valley seem to mingle with her memories of her beloved, so that the present abundance and the past linear line of railroad track that was the landscape of the affair are connected through narrative juxtaposition. Indeed, "reminiscences" is a better term for how Gunnars's narrator and Kristeva's own theoretical narrative are engaged: it has less of the authority of "memories," implies a process of retrieval or translation to the present, and also suggests some sense of implicating the self in the past, as though dwelling in the past moment.

This border between memory and fantasy has everything to do with the border between the self and the other, and, possibly, is the very entrée to incorporation. It is a profoundly narcissistic space:

> His fragmented mistress dissolves into a space where she is regained through recalled feelings and sensations . . . These palpitations revive and dislocate the image of the other and the image of the self: *I* am many. Finally oblivion leads the narrator to a conviction he had already suspected: the woman he loves is merely an extension of the self, a fluctuating creation of a desire made of the same substance as the motion that corrupts time. (187)

These are the narcissistic identifications discussed in the second section of this chapter when I pointed out how Freud argues that such narcissistic identifications are the precondition for melancholia and the sort of incorporation of the other that is an exciting cause of and defines the work of melancholia. Though, as Kristeva suggests, this is not only a predisposition of the melancholic, but the nature of desire:

> Desire consists of drawing loved ones toward yourself, dissolving them under your own perceptions until they become contaminated, unattainable, confused with objects, external, woven in the same fabric, neither inside

> nor outside, but a continuous chain of sensations – madeleines, tea, hawthorns, pink dresses, blue eyes, or stained glass windows in the Combray church. (187)

The stained glass window of the Combray church becomes the defining axis upon which the narrator's remembrances spin. The guiding force behind these reminiscences has an essentially sadomasochistic root of desire that seeks the other, but ultimately to incorporate and destroy it. What remains unclear is how this perception of the narcissistic identification pertains to Kristeva's relationship with her imaginary Proust and her reading relationship with *In Search of Lost Time*. Ultimately, perhaps the narcissistic dissolution she theorizes is dialectic, as she in effect feels dissolved into Proust's style and on the other hand dissolves Proust into her own reading affect, identifying with him in her primordial sadomasochism.

Behind these three forces – attention to sensual minutae, desire's cubist mirror, and the manifest primordial sadomasochism behind it all – the destruction of the other or its successful incorporation remain possibilities thanks to the melancholic's resistance to time. As Kristeva points out, Proust's style discovers a temporal anteriority:

> When faced with two inexorable forms of temporality – death (Albertine dies, desire dies) and change (inflicted on the body, like aging, or on society, like war) – and with the illusory rebirth of youth, the novel goes beyond the vagaries of linear time and recovers a sort of temporal anteriority. Hence, by avoiding time's two implacable imperatives – death and change, which are also imperatives of *desire*, be it the desire to love or the desire to dominate – what we might call a "timeless time" locates a

> series of sensations on the margins of time, that is, in space. The recollection-sensation does away with time and replaces it with an eternity – the spatial eternity of a literary work that Proust compares to a cathedral. (189)

This resistance to linear time, to death and chance, does away with time. The circling Freud theorizes as the melancholic's laments, the unnamed narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting*'s circular remembrances, Kristeva's perception of Proust's preoccupations and her own performance of his cubist mirroring all seek a time embodied. Like the title of Proust's work they are each "in search of" though never entirely acquiring what they desire:

> Although my memory pinpoints "settings" and "places" by reconstructing the various relationships I have had and lining them up in a row. Instead, it forms "revolutions" that circle around me and around other people. Were a book to allow for this revolving composite, it would "*use not the two-dimensional psychology* which we normally use but a quite different sort of *three-dimensional psychology*." (189)

These "revolutions" and the cubist mirror Proust employs both attempt this three-dimensional psychology he proposes. Even this is ostensibly a psychology that involves the narrator and the characters that populate his life, it is this psychology that attracts Kristeva as it brings literature to the level of "experience."

Yet, the cubist mirror's chaos of memory constructed through such a "revolving composite" needs something to string together the revolutions so as to lead to a composite. As the unnamed narrator of *The Substance of Forgetting* points out,

> We are suspended in the string of our desire like a spider hanging from its web. The spider is lowering itself from the balcony slowly and it will never reach the ground . . . . There is a recognition that the body has its own technique. Its own story. Its own fiction. We can try to make sense of the fiction of the body but the thread continues to elude us. The subject vanishes around the corner just as we think we have caught sight of him. A recognition that *we make ourselves the instruments of each other's jouissance*. We cannot do without each other and we do not want each other at the same time. (122)

As already discussed, through the desire and impossibility of fully incorporating the beloved other – the desire as always "in search of" – what Gunnars's unnamed narrator picks up here is the body as the liminal ground on which the subject experiences that other and attempts that incorporation. Kristeva argues that, "Writing is memory regained from signs to flesh and from flesh to signs through an intense identification (and a dramatic separation from) an other who is loved, desired, hated, and rendered indifferent" (245). Yet, as the previous quotation from *The Substance of Forgetting* suggests, the body itself is a fiction that has "its own technique," and attempting to make sense of that (if you will) style is futile. While in Kristeva's theorizing the body is the precondition for "experience," it can also be perceived, as *The Substance of Forgetting*'s narrator suggests, as the very object of desire the subject seeks an experience from, whose very indifference and separateness complicates "experience" – perhaps what makes Kristeva's idea of "experience" so profound is its liminal and un-incorporable aspect. Here again is the melancholic's ambivalence caught on the double desire to ingest and regurgitate the other. Writing is an uncertain activity, a seeking for pure time so as to further secure the lost object and concurrently to protect against the potential for further assault, further loss – activity to acquire stasis, stasis to put an end to melancholia.

In the resistance to time's imperatives, in the desire to prolong the lost beloved's presence (even if it is only to ultimately destroy the beloved), the melancholic still finds a logic. Gunnars's unnamed narrator finds this logic near the end of her narrative:

> Because it is my pleasure to live here. Because it is the place of *jouissance* that is censored yet binding. Only your moments of pleasure can stand for the string that holds the grapevines up for the sun to see. It is *pleasure as that which binds incoherent life together,* Jacques Lacan said. All my incoherent years are held up by the pleasure of being here. By the dew on the grasses, the wind in the ponderosas, the grapes on the vine. (117)

It is *jouissance*, then, the pleasure of the drama, which defines the melancholic's peculiar chaotic logic. Against time the melancholic contradictorily is an absolute subject of time, saved from falling through the cubist mirror into absolute chaos by the binding of *jouissance*.

The melancholic's lament is a narcissistic lament to a beloved who either never existed or no longer exists. As a reader, as an analyst, or as an analysand affected by Gunnars's melancholic narratives, one can be seduced by an indifferent lover. These are tales told to avoid, like Scheherazade's, to avoid dying, and the reader can listen to these narratives only by willing to risk the chance they may never let him or her go.

CHAPTER TWO:

SPEECH AND TRANSFERENCE
IN AUDREY THOMAS'S *BLOWN FIGURES*,
SIGMUND FREUD'S CASE STUDY 'DORA,'
AND JACQUES LACAN'S
"SPEECH IN THE TRANSFERENCE"

PREFATORY NOTES

> To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is the bad dream. (250)
>
> *The Bell Jar*
>
> Sylvia Plath

Freud argues that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (1893, 58), as he will later argue that in melancholics "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged" (253). The melancholic's apparent introversion and the hysteric's alternating introversion and extroversion share in common this same confounding relationship between inside and outside, unconscious and conscious; their condition is defined just as much by what they don't say, as by what they do say. It is with this ambivalence that the reader must approach hysteria and melancholia, in order to move from their similarities towards what distinguishes them from one another.

This chapter moves to a discussion of melancholia and its relationship to hysteria, as a way to talk about writing and a sense of the social, or the audience. Through looking at Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures*, Sigmund Freud's "Fragment of an Analysis of A Case of Hysteria ('Dora')," and Jacques Lacan's seminar, "Speech in the Transference," this chapter will examine the ways in which the hysteric's gender struggle, her struggle to negotiate an identity despite the inherent contradictions she faces, is a terrifying discourse that undoes psychoanalysis and that discipline's urge "to know" and explain. Yet it is also a melancholy question, to be sure, full of ambivalence and a desire for some elusive originary wholeness. In the case of Thomas's text, what Isobel ultimately searches for is a reliable presence, which she seeks through embodiment. She searches for an embodiment for losses she cannot represent, for a contradictory gender where desire and the body collide over roles like lover and mother.

First, it is important to reiterate the distinction between melancholia as a state and what are melancholy moments of other states or illnesses. The question that will preoccupy us, however, is what is the relationship between the melancholy moment and the hysteric: what purpose does this melancholy aspect of the illness serve, what does it offer to the hysteric, and how does the hysteric overcome it? This general question will provide us with a window to understanding more clearly melancholia's relationship to the Other, and its desire for witnessing. Moreover, this line of questioning and emphasis on the relationship with the other will lead us, with the Freud and Lacan texts, to an exploration of transference and counter-transference.

Theorists such as Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose, and Toril Moi have pointed to Freud's own frustration, "his incapacitating sense of knowledge as complete" (Moi 333) and his struggle with "the meaning of his own male hysteria" (Mitchell 63). The conditions surrounding his publication of the case study on Dora, his behaviour in the analytic process and after the fact, and his blind spots in the analysis will help us to understand how the hysteric's symptoms and affliction can affect the analyst.

For Lacan, the analyst of analysts and of analysis, countertransference is about never submitting to the Other's, the analysand's desire. Where with Thomas's narrator I will be discussing the difficulties of representation, with Lacan I will look at his resistance to representation. From the absence of analysands in his work to his refusal to publish the 'seminar,'[32] from his advocating variable times for analytic sessions to his closing of the École Freudienne,[33] Lacan contradictorily claimed "I am not the subject presumed to know," but rhetorically situated himself so that one could never conclusively believe that statement: knowledge was always held as inconclusive and authority, perhaps by being deferred, was protected.

These three texts will read one another and in turn be read back as they explore the anticipatory, desiring, and resisted relationship between a woman and her hysterical sense of herself, between analyst and analysand, and between a leading thinker and his devoted followers. While in the first chapter we looked more at the melancholic's unconscious struggles, this chapter's emphasis on understanding the realm of the Other in analysis will hopefully give insight into the melancholic's social aspect and what vicissitudes she faces in her conscious struggles.

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[32] 'Lacan gave "twenty-seven annual series of lectures [that] are usually referred to collectively as 'the seminar', in the singular" (Evans 176).

[33] Lacan founded the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP) in 1964. In opening the EFP he purposely called it a school and as Dylan Evans points out, "it was the first time that a psychoanalytic organization had been called a 'school' rather than an 'association' or a 'society' . . . Lacan was particularly keen to avoid the dangers of the hierarchy dominating the institution, which he saw in the International Psycho-Analytical Association (IPA), and which he blamed for the theoretical misunderstandings which had come to dominate the IPA; the IPA had become, he argued, a kind of church" (171). Jacqueline Rose points out that Lacan represented the closure of the EFP with the utterance "'Je père-sévère' ('I persevere' – the pun is on 'per' and 'père' (father) – the whole problem of mastery and paternity which has cut across the institutional history of his work . . . It has been the endless paradox of Lacan's position that he has provided the most systematic critique of forms of identification and transference which, by dint of this very fact, he has come most totally to represent" (53).

i. THE DRAMA OF NARRATIVE

From the beginning, the narrator of *Blown Figures* warns us that Isobel, standing on the ship waiting to leave, "feels hemmed in, is beginning to see edges" (15). Ostensibly, here, the edges she sees could be read as the edges of her own subjectivity. She occupies multiple subject positions, addressing Mrs. Miller in the second person, referring to Isobel in the third person. Within the triptych, though, the narrative moves in some very rigid ways. Isobel will only be talked about in the third person, and when she speaks, as she does above, she is quoted. From the beginning, the narrator dedicates the story to Isobel: "to Isobel because you are fond of fairy-tales, and have been ill, I have made you a story all for yourself – a new one that nobody has read before" (7). There is an ambiguity in the line "made you a story" referring both to the narrator's act of creation and the fact that Isobel's reality is being made into a story. At the heart of this tale is the narrative danger of telling "truths" through writing and turning them into "fictions."

Fiction and lived experience have an ambiguous relationship here. The running commentary that the narrator and Miss Miller provide in some sense witness Isobel's experiences:

> "I am a totally dependent person" thought Isobel sadly. "I am only brave by reflection, when someone else is with me. Then I can steam ahead. By myself I am a quivering piece of jelly." (107)

At their most positive functions, the self-conscious voice of the narrator and the ever absent /present Miss Miller, mark attempts to overcome isolation, to forge bravery. There is an ensemble sense, perhaps, a consensus to meet the edges of the world a little more bravely.

In return, Isobel's experience is essential to the narrator, for she is the active force of this journey, a body traveling counterpoint to the narrator's bogged down self-reflection. Though it takes her a while to admit it, the narrator herself looks to Isobel for possibilities beyond her own reductive and cynical readings:

> Isobel, can you tell me the name of a place that nobody ever heard of, where nothing ever happened, in a country which has not yet been discovered? (55)

The narrator's narrative desire here is strikingly similar to the narrator's desire in Gunnars's *The Substance of Forgetting*, where she asked,

> What is a sentence that is at rest? Could I write a sentence that has no tension in it? No elliptical curve from desire to return? A sentence that acknowledges it is tired and wants to rest. The sentence knows what it wants. To rest awhile. A sentence without an Other. Without a lover. Without a desired object. Perhaps even a sentence without a subject. No ego. (50)

Where Gunnars's narrator desires a language unencumbered by the conflict in articulation, Thomas's narrator desires a place without history, without claim, full of possibility. The first desires an uncomplicated and pure language with which she would represent her complicated and conflicted life, while the second desires a place where her own bodily subjectivity in all its confusing gendered-ness and contradictory desiring messiness can find presence.

Since Isobel in her travels is not initially successful at finding this utopian place, the narrator can only witness Isobel's inability to fulfill her quest. At several turns, the narrator resists her own sense of helplessness by trying to convince Isobel that she is the one in control, the voice of authority: "Ah Isobel, I who mould your head like a waterpot, how carefully I arranged you that hot September noon on the verandah of the H.M.S. *Pylades*" (118). At different points, the narrator turns from addressing Isobel directly and speaks to either Miss Miller or the reader (some other position, playing witness) and argues, "I can do anything I want with Isobel. I can make her fat or thin, like a funhouse mirror" (140). Thus, the narrative voice represents some critical faculty run astray, capable of altering Isobel's physical and psychological sense of herself; and, when exacerbated by conflicts between Isobel, her memories, and her location, this narrator turns into an internal persecutory aspect of Isobel.

This threatening aspect of the narrator is best represented in the recurring, fraught image of the clay water pot. The first image of the clay pot recurs, encapsulating passive objectifying images of creation, storage and fragility. At its limit, the narrator turns this image into either a threat or a warning with an old proverb: "he who moulds your head like a waterpot it is he who can break you" (454). Other similar images compete with this one: “How silly you are Isobel, I could rub you out like a chalkboard” (227). The narrator asks, “Ah. Isobel, how do you like belonging to another person’s dream?”(301). And the narrator tries to make Isobel signify through intertextuality. Isobel is referred to as Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*; she becomes the Little Mermaid, whose feet “are bleeding like sunsets on the painted blue floors of the bedroom” (328); she’s Gerda who fails to rescue Kay from the Snow Queen, the princess in “The Princess and the Pea” (437). These discursive attempts to control Isobel, and even Miss Miller at times, begin to denote the narrator at her most impotent, at the moments when her usefulness is becoming most suspect.

When Isobel crosses the unnamed border, the relationship between her and the narrator changes. In this phase, she seems to act alone, and the relationship between the two of them is characterized by alienation and distance. The critical voice of the narrator laments the loss of something she cannot describe: “Where is the light that I put out, Miss Miller? Help me to get it back into myself; help me to glow”(402). As she is losing her imaginary control of Isobel, the critical voice turns to Miss Miller and begins to be aware of some other loss, something that existed prior to this journey and which defined the relationship between this narrator and Isobel. At this point, the narrator’s critical supervisory voice relinquishes control:

> Ah Isobel, do not give up. You have come farther than most but it is there for everybody. You’ve worked for it; it’s what we’ve taken all these years to achieve.

> Anything is better than this emptiness. (403)

The narrator is not clear here on what the "it" – which has been sought, worked for and achieved – is, but she has some blind faith, in the last line, that whatever can be achieved by continuing on is greater than the current "emptiness." Whether it was an imaginary control -- only the result of her rhetorical moves with Isobel, Miss Miller and the reader -- it still maintained some hold on Isobel and defined her interactions with others.

The edges that Isobel is aware of, at the beginning of her journey, demarcate fissures in her way of understanding her own story, most obviously sounded in the demarcations the narrator makes between the silent witness of Miss Miller, the manic traveler Isobel, and the hyper self-conscious discursive meddlings she makes trying to negotiate a story between herself and these two others. As mediator and witness, as a self-consciousness which mediates this tri-partite structure, the narrator is a locus defined by desire and fear, both nostalgic and anticipatory; she is the aspect of Isobel which cannot invest in the presence she is seeking in her travels, though whether she is Isobel's madness or her sanity remains to be seen.

ii. THE INSIGHTFUL THUMB-SUCKER –
OR, DORA'S CASE STUDY OF FREUD

Turning to Sigmund Freud's "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')," there is a similar tri-partite structure operating between Dora, Freud, and his conception of a reading audience. Indeed, I would argue that the case study struggles with its own reason for being, struggles between the urge to be a love letter, begging for the return of the beloved, and a testament claiming innocence and analytic prowess, and this is in turn an ambivalent struggle between others: the medical community, a popular readership, and somewhere out in the world, Dora, who might come back if she only knew how well Freud had analyzed her.

Four years passed between Freud's writing of the case study and it publication. He might have been waiting for Dora to return once more; or he might have been, as he says in his prefatory remarks, waiting "till hearing that a change [had] taken place in the patient's life of such a character" (36) that she would not be recognized. But what also structures this time span is his fear of the reception the case study would have: "anyhow, it is the most subtle thing I have yet written and will produce an even more horrifying effect than usual" (32). It is a horrifying effect he anticipates, not just a horrified audience, so it is also his own horror he fears.

His audience, as he himself admits, was a complicated body at the time in which he was going to publish this case study. Though, it is more the quality of the writing that worries him than the readers he imagines specifically:

> I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. (PE 3: 231)

It would not be until after *Dora*'s publication that *Interpretation of Dreams* would eventually become a best seller, so at this point in his career Freud's anxiety is about finding himself "implicated inextricably in the complexities of narrative creation" (Bernheimer 10). Freud's case work requires him to retell Dora's story and this implicates him as storyteller, brings him into intimate contact with the hysteric's discourse, so that "one might argue that Freud's ambivalence about the literary aspect of his work reflects his uneasy awareness of his own hysterical potential" (11). From his opening remarks, Freud is anxiously implicated in the work and unable to get a safe scientific distance.

In an attempt to protect himself from misreadings and potential further implications, Freud breaks the readership down into these basic categories: non-medical, medical, medical who read "for their private delectation" (37), and the "pure-minded reader" (37). He proposes to do away with the non-medical variety through two actions:

> Needless to say, I have allowed no name to stand which could put a non-medical reader upon the scent; and the publication of the case in a purely scientific and technical periodical should, further, afford a guarantee against unauthorized readers of this sort. (37)

Freud sets out to limit his audience, attempting to locate it as medical. Then, to reduce the risk of prurient readings, he warns those after "private delectation" that, "every case history which I may have occasion to publish in the future will be secured against their perspicacity by similar guarantees of secrecy, even though this resolution is bound to put quite extraordinary restrictions upon my choice of material" (37). For those who are "pure-minded," and at risk of being appalled that he would converse on sexual subjects with a young woman, he locates the trouble with the culture and not himself, as he will later when he claims, "what one writes is not for the passing day"(32).

Yet even after these prefatory remarks have raised potential criticisms and dealt with them, in the actual case study itself Freud still pre-emptively imagines what will be the concerns of his audience:

> This short piece of analysis may perhaps have excited in the medical reader – apart from scepticism to which he is entitled – feelings of astonishment and horror; and I am prepared at this point to look into these two reactions so as to discover whether they are justifiable. The astonishment is probably caused by my daring to talk about such delicate

> and unpleasant subjects to a young girl – or, for that matter, to any woman who is sexually active. (81)

Freud anticipates the indignant reader, here a medical reader who, he imagines, will not approve of his method; the style is self-conscious and anxious. He goes on to argue that,

> It is possible for a man to talk to girls and women upon sexual matters of every kind without doing them harm and without bringing suspicion upon himself, so long as, in the first place, he adopts a particular way of doing it, and, in the second place, can make them feel convinced that it is unavoidable. (82)

Freud will in practice contradict his own method, but what I want to point out here is how the method of his analysis differs from the method of his writing --- a difference of tact. He raises what he imagines will be criticisms, so that he might refute them and attempts to make the audience "feel convinced that it is unavoidable" (82). As the writing addresses itself to the audience, then, it is defensive, admonishing, and refuting. Similar to the unnamed narrator's relationship with Miss Miller in *Blown Figures*, then, Freud's relationship with his audience is a dialogue delivered as a monologue, betraying certainly an overt awareness, even fear, of an audience. Miss Miller and the potentially horrified medical community need not be present at all, for they are basically faculties of the narrator's and Freud's subjectivity – they will remain absent / present as a result.

From the first, Freud admits that this case study is unorthodox and admits that a significant part of what the reading audience will be surprised at is the amount of information he will reveal about the analysand, Dora. He points out that "whereas before [he was] accused of giving no information about [his] patients, now [he] shall be accused of giving information about [his] patients which ought not to be given"(35). He addresses this concern by calling those critics "narrow-minded," and confessing that "the presentation of [his] case histories remains a problem which is hard for [him] to solve" (35). He feels bound to pass on the information, for,

> if it is true that the causes of hysterical disorders are to be found in the intimacies of the patients' psychosexual life, and that hysterical symptoms are the expression of their most secret and repressed wishes, then the complete elucidation of a case of hysteria is bound to involve the revelation of those intimacies and the betrayal of those secrets. (35-36)

Indeed, there is much to be said for making the case study specific to the analysand, and to resist being too universalizing. Yet the problem here is ethical, in that Freud did not tell Dora that he was publishing the case study and did not seek her approval:

> It is certain that the patients would never have spoken if it had occurred to them that their admissions might possibly be put to scientific uses; and it is equally certain that to ask them themselves for leave to publish their case would be quite unavailing. (36)

Freud refrains from seeking the analysands' approval, for he feels it is a certainty that they would not provide it. In other words, he justifies not seeking their approval with the argument that if they knew he would be indiscrete with their confidences they would be prone to sit in silence. He does a violence to Dora by not asking her permission, a violence he is aware of, and yet in the balance of things, thinks is permissible. As the discursive master, he reserves the right in the analytic relationship to represent the relationship, disseminate it, take its private speech and make it public.

What makes this ethically permissible in Freud's books is that as an analyst he has a larger responsibility that he should not neglect:

> But in my opinion the physician has taken upon himself duties not only towards the individual patient but towards science as well; and his duties towards science mean ultimately nothing else than his duties towards the many other patients who are suffering or will some day suffer from the same disorder. (36)

To sacrifice the one to prevent the loss or hurt of many is a slippery ethical argument, which is no new criticism -- and this work will not dwell on it – but I point it out because it defines how Freud writes his addressee, how he defends such a personal writing.

With specific reference to Dora's case study, he maintains, "I think I have taken every precaution to prevent my patient from suffering any such injury"(36). But he adds,

> I naturally cannot prevent the patient herself from being pained if her own case history should accidentally fall into her hands. But she will learn nothing from it that she does not already know; and she may ask herself who besides her could discover from it that she is the subject of this paper. (37)

Regardless of Freud's defence, there is a certain violence in recognition, in receiving an epistle to which one cannot respond. If analysis is indeed some sort of a dialogue, Freud rhetorically ruptured that when he came to publish the case study, written after Dora's departure and without her permission.

The dialogue, though, was ruptured from the beginning. Freud will note that Dora's father "handed her over to [Freud] for psychotherapeutic treatment"(40), but he will not admit that there might be a correlation between this and the exchange Dora felt was made when her father permitted Herr K.'s affections with her as a way of hiding his intimacy with Frau K. Indeed, Freud summarily dismisses the exchange, which seems very convenient given that it obscures the manner and reason for Dora's "exchange" between her father and Freud. He will admit that "[e]very proposal to consult a new physician aroused [Dora's] resistance, and it was only her father's authority which induced her to come to [me] at all" (52), but he will still insist that the transference occurred in other places, not see this foundational moment's part in the development of the transference.

Freud couldn't successfully identify the transference in these gestures, but for some reason chose instead to imagine it came through a genuine attraction to him:

> I came to the conclusion that the idea had probably occurred to her one day during a session that she would like to have a kiss from me. This would have been the exciting cause which led her to repeat the warning dream and to form her intention of stopping the treatment. Everything fits

> together satisfactorily upon this view; but owing to the characteristics of 'transference' its validity is not susceptible of definite proof. (110)

It is his attractiveness then, not his position in the chain of exchange analyzed above or his role as analyst, as the one who interprets her, which leads to the transference and to her departure. His own attractiveness, his magnetism, is the downfall of the analytic relationship, and here is the real reason why the psychoanalyst's couch should face away.

The current of exchange does not end with Freud, because he cannot see the role he plays. Dora was passed on to him, and he passes her on when he publishes the case study:

> In Dora's case the secret was kept until this year. I had long been out of touch with her, but a short while ago I heard that she had recently fallen ill again from other causes, and had confided to her physician that she had been analysed by me when she was a girl. This disclosure made it easy for my well-informed colleague to recognize her as the Dora of 1899. (43f)

There is a lineage here, where Dora gets passed on as an object, first of sexual value, then, as a result of the ensuing hysteria, as an object of analytic interest. That her father passed her on so he could continue his affair and that Freud passed her on to maintain his analytical prowess shows us that intention is not the issue here. At issue is how the exchange lives on in the life of the analysand, how being an exchangeable object figures in Dora's world, or how it must have, since this is unrepresented in the analytic discourse. Toril Moi argues in *What is a Woman?* that Freud "signally fails to notice the transference in Dora, and therefore systematically misinterprets her transference symptoms throughout the text" (336-7). Freud's inability to see the transference makes him a link in the circuitous path of Dora's exchange.

Within the case study, Freud struggles for rhetorical and analytical control with Dora as subject and object of his study. As many have pointed out, Freud included, the Dora represented to the reader is the product of transcription and translation all filtered through Freud's recollections:

> The wording of these dreams was recorded immediately after the session, and they thus afforded a secure point of attachment for the chain of interpretations and recollections which proceeded from them. The case history itself was only committed to writing from memory after the treatment was at an end, but while my recollection of the case was still fresh and was heightened by my interest in its publication. (38)

Freud orders the case study and his recollections around the fact that the relationship lasted only three months and that most of their work was centred around the two dreams, and it is his interest in publication that motivated the writing of the case history. The reader cannot ever know to what extent Freud's own subjective interest in returning to his theories from *The Interpretation of Dreams* and his developing interest that would lead to *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* affected his memory here.

The case study is organized around the two dreams, yet despite the relatively chronological unfolding, Freud himself feels the writing is disorganized. He locates this trouble with the analysand:

> I cannot help wondering how it is that the authorities can produce such smooth and precise histories in cases of hysteria. As a matter of fact the patients are incapable of giving such reports about themselves . . . their communications run dry, leaving gaps unfilled, and riddles unanswered . . . The connections – even the ostensible ones – are for the most part incoherent, and the sequence of different events is uncertain. (45-46)

He adds that he "should not have known how to deal with the material involved in the history of a treatment which had lasted, perhaps, for a whole year" (45). For Freud, there is something uncontainable, something heterogenous about the hysteric's speech which the analyst's speech can only resist with futility.

In reaction to this hysteric's heterogenous speech, Freud argues that "nothing of any importance has been altered in it except in some places the order in which the explanations are given; and this has been done for the sake of presenting the case in a more connected form" (38). It would seem to follow that the places where the case study makes sense, the places where it takes a more "connected form" are furthest from the hysteric's speech, and are closest to Freud's.

At the heart of this is the issue of discursive power and representation. Isobel and Dora are narrated and interpreted by Thomas's unnamed narrator and Freud. Their searches for cures are not separate from having to contend with this discursive power. The scenes of their journies (geographical, analytical, nostalgic) are at their core a struggle with interpretation.

iii. "SOMETHING REMARKABLY LIKE A QUESTION" – OR, THE DRAMA OF SPEAKING

This play of discursive power and representation questions the function of authority in the tri-partite narrative structures I have been discussing. In Lacan's "Speech in the Transference," Seminar I XIX-XXII, the issue of authority and its existence within an ensemble cast arises in relation to the curiously mirrored dialogical aspect of the 'seminar' and the centre of the discussion, "De locutionis significatione," a dialogue written by St. Augustine. In the second of the four sections, Lacan and Father Beirnaert explore Augustine's dialogue in a dialogue format. What is interesting, for our purposes, is how the dialogue format of the 'seminar,' in particular, works for and against Lacan's purposes.

Augustine's dialogue, the centre of Lacan and Beirnaert's discussion in the 'seminar,' "was written by Augustine in 389, some years after his return to Africa. Its title is *On the master*, and it uses two interlocutors – Augustine and his son Adeodatus, who was then sixteen years old" (250). The dialogue format is an interesting mirror to the 'seminar' structure because of its dramatic qualities and the manner in which, at its best, it tries to resist the sort of dogmatism a monovocal writing might struggle with.

At the same time, in the light of Socrates' persecution, it seems reasonable to imagine that the dialogue format was useful as a way of dispersing discursive authority.

Under pressure, one could attribute "authority" to one of the characters (often based on real life personages) in the drama. The dialogue format usefully accommodates both a lack of faith in "authority" and the fear of being placed in such a position. This, it will become apparent, is a further issue of representation and brings up the question of transference and reading once more.

In Lacan's case, in the seminar at hand, there are several characters: Granoff, who gives a presentation on two articles; Father Beirnaert, who co-presents Augustine's dialogue; O. Mannoni, Mme Aubry, Dr Leclaire, Dr Bejarano, all voices from the audience. Yet, there are also two figures who do not speak in the actual 'seminar' or in the transcribed version, but shape the dialogue nonetheless: Freud and Jacques-Alain Miller, the editor of the 'seminar.'

Freud, indeed, is a spectre in most of Lacan's work, and operates in much the same way that Isobel does in *Blown Figures*. For the unnamed narrator of *Blown Figures* there is a great deal of reliance on Isobel, on what Isobel does in her journeys, her mistakes and her stumblings. For Lacan, whose "return" to Freud remains more abstract, theoretical, there is a reliance on the details of Freud's experience. Freud is a counterpoint, a foil, in the sense that he provides material on which Lacan can reflect, and yet, for the most part Lacan, like the unnamed narrator of *Blown Figures*, would have a limited existence without that "other."

With the 'seminar' in particular, Lacan's discourse is defined greatly by Jacques-Alain Miller, his son-in-law, whom he agreed to let transcribe and edit Seminar XX:

> For twenty years Lacan refused to let the Seminar be published, although summaries of parts of it were published by Pontalis with Lacan's consent. It was only in 1973 that he agreed to allow Miller to begin the laborious task of establishing a text on the basis of stenographic transcripts and tape-recordings. The resultant text is as much Miller's as it is Lacan's. Chapter titles, headings and punctuation are all Miller's; he is a joint signatory of the publisher's contract and has the legal status of a co-author. Even though Miller claims that as an individual, he counted for nothing in the establishment of the text, he admits that it 'could have been different'. (Macey 7)

Jacques-Allain Miller and Thomas's Miss Miller have similar functions here, as they stand as unspeaking figures in a drama in which they are neither the "author" or the "reader," but nevertheless play a significant role in the drama of creation.

The product that results is an odd collection of omissions and gaps, and as a result, there has been a great deal of frustration in the psychoanalytic community, where what was useful about the 'seminar' seems to be compromised in the transcription and publication:

> With the published volumes of the Seminar, matters become even more complex. Some sections are formal lectures; others are improvised addresses to seminar groups. It is not clear from the text which were taped and which were taken down by stenographers. On occasion whole sessions

> are missing, and the chronology becomes difficult to follow. In some cases Lacan's answers to questions from the floor are reproduced, but not the questions themselves. Speakers from the floor are not always identified and interventions are not always attributed to anyone specific. It is sometimes possible to read Lacan's comments on a paper itself. The Seminar poses all the classic problems of the transmission of knowledge, beginning with the question of the status of the text which conveys it. (Macey 7)

As long as Miller holds literary control over Lacan's work it will be impossible to quantify what role he plays in the dramas that make up the published 'seminar.' Yet, regardless of his role, regardless of how much he has shaped the printed text, from the beginning it was a formidable, perhaps even impossible task – even in its edited and "incomplete" form it is unmanageable.

So within Lacan's 'seminar,' as a published dialogue, there are the unspeaking and yet authoritative voices of Freud and Miller, shaping a dialogue between Lacan and Father Beirnaert, as they present to an audience at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne, who at times interjects or asks questions. If even Miller admits that "it could have been different," and if the association known as *Après* "claimed that Miller's text was in fact a rewriting and therefore an interpretation of the original" (Macey 7) and fought for Lacan's ideas to be considered "public domain," at the very least it follows that this has something to do with the difficulty of taking what was first and foremost an oral text and trying to transcribe it without losing the effectiveness of the 'seminar' as a pedagogical and philosophical tool.

Lacan did authorize the first seminar Miller edited and published, and he did make him his literary executor, a significant passing on of authority, so on some level this textual move is authorized by Lacan, though this is surprising considering his putative resistance to the written word. He was once reported "to have told his seminar that he had spent a weekend destroying papers, 'because God knows what use might have been made of them after [his] death" (Macey 2). His *Écrits* were for the most part the sum of his written work, and most of them came from lectures or papers he delivered orally first. Indeed, Lacan seemed most comfortable in the 'seminar':

> Given Lacan's insistence that speech is the only medium of psychoanalysis (E, 40) it is perhaps appropriate that the original means by which Lacan developed and expounded his ideas should have been the spoken word. Indeed, as one commentator has remarked, "It must be recalled that virtually all of Lacan's "writings" (*Écrits*) were originally oral presentations, that in many ways the open-ended Seminar was his preferred environment." (Evans 176)

That the 'seminar' was his "preferred environment" should not be surprising considering Lacan's resistance to traditional authority (analytically and pedagogically)[34] and his insistence on asking questions instead of providing answers.

Within the dialogue, it is in the second and the fourth sections that Lacan interacts with others and there is a dynamic aspect to the 'seminar.' Most distinctly, it is with Father Beirnaert and Dr Leclaire. In the first instance, the interaction seems equal, but in several places Beirnaert asserts the fact that he is the authoritative translator, that they are in his territory so to speak, and in response, Lacan defers to him:

> LACAN: From the sign to teaching.
>
> BEIRNAERT: That's a poor translation, it is rather more like to the signifiable.
>
> LACAN: So that is how you translate dicendum. Alright, but Saint Augustine tells us on the other hand that dicere, which is the essential meaning of speech, is docere. (257)

Lacan defers to Father Beirnaert, yet slips into the next subject, not dwelling on Beirnaert's authority in the matter.

With Dr Leclaire, Lacan seems less involved in a dialogue with an equal and more argumentative, authoritative. This is in the last seminar of this four-part discussion on transference, and it is the last seminar of the year, which begins with a question from

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[34] Yet, if we can regard the preference for the Seminar format and the style of his written work, their resistance to reading, as rhetorical moves to avoid being fetishized as "the one presumed to know," what do we do with the paradox whereby his own resistance, his refusal makes him seem more likely to know and leads to a general culture of analysts and theorists trying to claim him? Are the seeds of his own fetishization and eventual mythology in his own ambiguous dialoguing?

Mme Aubry, that elicits Lacan's response: "I am delighted by your question. Perhaps it will enable me to lend to our last meeting of the year the familiar atmosphere which I prefer to the magisterial" (273).

Yet Lacan's preference for the familiar is put to the test almost immediately when he addresses Dr Leclaire, one of the audience members, and says,

> Leclaire, surely you must also have things to ask. Last time after the session you said to me something remarkably like a question – *I would have really liked you to have talked about transference, even so.*
>
> These are tough, those *even so*'s – I do nothing but talk to them about it and they're still not satisfied. There are profound reasons why the subject of transference always leaves you craving for more. . . . What, in short, are you still craving for? (273)

Lacan singles Leclaire out, then goes from addressing him directly ("you must have things to ask") to talking about him as though he's not there ("I do nothing but talk to them about it and they're still not satisfied"), making him stand in for a "they" who attends the 'seminar', and making of them an example of transference. Then he returns to a personal and intimate address and accuses Leclaire of "craving" something from the interlocutor, Lacan.

When Dr Leclaire finally gets to speak, it is with less a question and more of a statement against Lacan's theories around transference, perhaps an attempt to clarify how he is being represented by Lacan:

> Hence one always finds it a bit difficult to give an account of your view of the transference in the current, ordinary terminology. Definitions of transference always say that it is a question of emotion, of feeling, of an affective phenomenon, which is categorically opposed to everything which, in an analysis, can be called intellectual. (274)

Lacan's reply takes him into what he believes the purpose of the 'seminar' is and how he perceives it handles itself pedagogically:

> Yes . . You see, there are two ways of applying a discipline which is structured as a teaching. There's what you hear, and then what you make of it. These two planes do not overlap, but they can be made to join in a certain number of secondary signs. It is from this angle that I see the fertility of every truly didactic action. It is not so much a question of transmitting concepts to you, as of explaining them to you leaving you the task, and the responsibility, of filling them in. But something else is perhaps even more imperative, which is to point out to you those concepts which should never be made use of. (274)

There is a central contradiction here that seems to define Lacan's work: he structures much of his work as a question, prefers and instructs it to be open to interpretation, but he also sees the 'seminar' as a place in which to do away with the wrong answer or interpretation. There seems to be a bit of having one's cake and eating it too.

Lacan's interactions with Dr Leclaire end in an odd turn when Lacan rigidly insists that they "expunge the term intellectualised" (275) and Dr Leclaire fights to be heard, fights to address why they are expunging terms, and argues that he is asking the question because he "wanted to get rid of something which had been left hanging" (275). Lacan turns dogmatic here, and the rhetoric of dismissing terminology and not listening to what Dr Leclaire has to say implies that the "familiar atmosphere" he claimed he preferred applies to areas of discussion which are safely within what he wants to discuss, with people he regards with some authority or at least holds in higher esteem than Dr Leclaire. The drama that unfolds here is about Lacan resisting interpretation until he has been too grossly misinterpreted, whereupon he returns as a figure of authority.

Lacan's attempts to be the subject who authorizes interpretation and his role as leader in the drama of the 'seminar' closely allies him with Freud's interpretive contortions in the Dora case study and the unnamed narrator's attempts to control the story, and by association, Isobel and Miss Miller, in *Blown Figures*. It becomes apparent that the speaking subject who attempts to control interpretation and representation, as in these three cases, is subject him or herself to contradictory desires: to be the central discursive authority, but not to speak alone, for to do so would mean to be reproachable, accountable and fallible. These conflicting desires bring speech and language to the fore, where these contradictions slip and betray the speaking subject even further.

iv. LANGUAGE AND EDGES

"Isobel doesn't live," he said, "she exits."

(193)

Nous Allons

Noose alone

Nurse along

Isobel, Beware the Eyes of Mars.

(173)

These narrative and linguistic slips mark the edge of what language and storytelling can tell, a realization that they are inadequate to the task of telling the story Thomas's narrator is trying to tell. Yet the slips also mark places where, in fine Freudian fashion, other truths suggest themselves in threatening ways.

These slips, firstly and most obviously mark the borders of language, where what has frightened the narrator in the past "was seeing all the joins. Innocent words detached themselves from sentences, grew big as signs" (32). The narrator's language is characterized by repetitions, slips of the tongue, and rhyming. Rhetorically, these slips in language indicate the narrator's attempt to resist the stranglehold, to introduce some sense of play into the language:

> She wondered about the relationship in English, between heat and hate. She wrote the words in her notebook and almost absent-mindedly crossed out the h's. (111)

In each of the above cases, the slip reveals something meaningful: that Isobel is having trouble committing to the present and that latent in the language is some sense of threat that surfaces in violent images and language.

What is equally frightening is that, though its representational abilities are limited for Isobel, language also sometimes signifies too much, slipping in truths that should not be present – as though language knows something she herself does not. She is caught, then, in a master / slave dialectic, where it seems her only options are to attempt to master the language or be mastered by it.

Narratively, the same battle is fought. The text establishes from the beginning that the rules of its tale will be non-sequitur – one story will slip into another, one perspective will shift to another: "Isobel bent to put a pan of biscuits in the oven. Two green mambas shot out the oven door" (56). What is perhaps a memory of a "real" event in her own history is isolated on a page out of sequence with the thoughts on the previous and proceeding pages. This non-sequitur frustrates, refuses to disassociate or associate, as the two mambas shooting out of the oven door become almost a metaphor for the two foetuses she lost, one through abortion and one through miscarriage. Indeed many of the non-sequiturs border on metaphoricity in this way, marking the text as one in which signification does not quite work and things cannot stand in for one another successfully and yet alluding to a connection that might have occurred or might still occur if the reader could rip the pages out of the book and put them in the right order, something the narrator significantly refuses or is unable to do.

These failed metaphors mark a gap between the object and the other object attempting to stand in for it, a sort of failed exchange. This failure, on the level of language, it would seem, is connected to a similar failed exchange:

> There was no one else about so she leaned against the counter and shuffled through a pile of unclaimed mail. All those unopened thoughts written in anger, love, politeness, desperation – it made her sad. (30)

And later in the text, deep into her travels, she reflects that "if she died alone there would be no witnesses to her terror" (113). There is, at least, a desire to be witnessed, or an awareness of the romantic notion that someone can witness a story.

This would seem to contradict the critics who have described the narrative's opaque quality, its indecipherability. Barbara Godard argues that *Blown Figures* "literally blows our minds, dislocating the figures of order which enable us to read" (46) and Susan Rudy Dorscht connects this relationship to the reader as connected to language itself: "There is no sense of authorial or 'self' control here among these "blowing figures." The speaking self is discontinuous, fictitious, under erasure, or just plain absent. If anxiety arises for the reader, it is because the writing forces us to recognize that language takes (literally!) quite for granted" (67). This critical relationship to the text is dynamically similar to the analyst's own countertransference. Indeed, as already discussed, it is uncannily similar to Kristeva's complaints about Didier who has her "completely convinced that he spoke for the sole purpose of ignoring [her]" (*New Maladies* 11) and dynamically similar to Kristeva's own reading performance (in relation to Proust's style) in *Time and Sense*. These are readers who find themselves in pronounced narcissistic relationships with the texts they are reading. So the narrator's desire must be enticed by the idea of a witness to her discourse, and yet remains ambivalent because all she finds in the faces of the doctors and the misunderstanding husbands and lovers is misrecognition.

What is most significant, though, in the resistance the narrator's style provokes, is that the sort of countertransference performance I pointed to above demonstrates why the text should seek witnessing elsewhere – to wish to be witnessed, in this case, is to wish misrecognition:

> "If the current cannot be turned off, thick rubber or dry clothes should be used to detach the person from the current but under no conditions should the rescuer actually touch him, since the current then passes through the second victim," who was, for an instant, the rescuer. That is the trouble now. How to rescue Isobel without touching her, without becoming oneself an Isobel. There are no thick rubber or dry clothes here. (201)

This current through the narrator's discourse, to be sure, marks not just a resistance to analysis, or to the sort of misrecognition that could occur. To regard the pseudo metaphors already discussed as "failed" neglects to address the complex way in which they flirt with signification, with metaphoricity, and ultimately work metonymically, as in the language of dreams, all speaking back to some unrepresentable loss. There is something seductively secure about this half-signification, this flirtation with representation. All things in this text are connected through some metaphorical basso continuo; all things get significance from the failed mournings with which Isobel grapples.

Within this master /slave dialectic of reader / writer, the narrator struggles with how desire works in language. There are two exercises that emphasize this examination of desire, and the first, interestingly enough, tries to encourage readers towards representation, attempting to include them in the narrator's own ambivalent struggle:

> "THINK OF SOMETHING GOD'S BOOK TELLS YOU TO DO. THEN, IN THIS SPACE, DRAW YOURSELF DOING IT." (120)

This exercise noticeably marks the narrator's awareness of how language can provoke and of how interpretation functions in the reading process.[35] For the narrator, this provocation and desire to interpret are intimately connected to the desire to make an emotional reality signify and to find a reader suitable to the tale being told.

The second exercise is a composition exercise that Isobel finds in the Bolga Mission staff room. Each line of the exercise is an independent clause followed by a colon and a space where, Isobel suspects, the reader is meant to practice her English skills by filling in the blanks. What is most interesting, though, is the narrator's parenthetical observations about the exercise. She begins the list with "(Pause of Anticipation)" (187) and explains after listing the exercises that "(The reader is plainly led to expect some kind of explanation. Provide suitable explanations in your own words. Write out each sentence in full.)" (187). Anticipation and the gap: the space following each colon, which requires explanation, each mark a desire brought about by the language, or indeed, as many have argued, within the language. What the narrator is pointing to here are the places where desire seems more obvious.

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[35] This passage is used by most critics to emphasize the role of the reader in the creation of the text. Though this is an interesting critical approach, it commits the same fault that analysts can easily commit: it assumes or fantasizes that the position of addressee was meant for them. My contention here is that to imagine the "implied reader" as anyone other than the narrator herself is to participate in a narcissistic exercise, and one that ultimately neglects to look at how the strategy serves the subject.

What follows the colon is, however, also silence and as such demarcates that which is repressed in the narrative. As already discussed, silence informs the syntax and narrative structure of *The Substance of Forgetting* and in this chapter Dora's regular path of symbolization was diverted by her repression. In *Blown Figures* silence appears even more strongly as the white on the page, the gap between the narrative and the dissonant fragments, comics, and images. The style of the novel is more similar to Gunnars's *The Prowler* or *The Rose Garden,* which are both anxious works, defined by abrupt transitions, an excessive number of plotlines, and a dislocated narrative. The repressed content seems to require more work to repress and as a result seems more threatening.

In the case of the writing exercise discussed above, the actual content of the sentences supplements the desire created by the syntax and the stories already narrated inform the exercise. Many of the sentences seem related to the stories the narrator has been telling, the first on the list in particular: "The doctor arrived too late:" (187). With all that she has been recounting about the fetus that she miscarried and the inability of the medical professionals or herself to keep her body from doing it, this is a particularly powerful prompt. The others are more indirectly evocative, covering subjects like gender ("Not all nurses are women"), language ("There is one great advantage in knowing English"), race ("White men are not all exactly the same colour"), and mistakes ("One day the young chief did something that a chief should never do"). All relate tangentially to what the narrator has been narrating, in terms of Isobel remembering her return to Africa, remembering her first visit, her struggle to understand what it means to be a woman in relation to all the discourses which compete to construct her, and her attempts to process the traumas of choosing to abort one fetus and losing the other.

These desiring aspects of the language she is trying to negotiate, anticipation and expectation, are initially the manner in which the subject perceives her reality as slave to signification. When she initially moves to gaps on the page, the exploration of the gaps in her story, it is to reveal this desire in writing and to understand how it oppresses her: "Squashed by the words, strangled by the sentences, [as she] struggles to get free" (193). As the gaps become more frequent, even larger, they are formed from a different desire. They become sites of potential, where what cannot be signified through language begins to find its space.

Indeed, the largest stretch of fragments (pages 229 –392) has only a few reprieves (238 and 341) and follows not long after the second exercise discussed above. Just as desire in language is becoming apparent to the narrator, she alters the topography of the page, creates more space than words, as though she is attempting to turn desire on its head, as though she is exploring and even denying the signified's desire for a signifier. At the very level of the sentence, then, she is aware of the role that interpretation and reading play in writing, and the gaps on the page can be read variously as an attempt to frustrate, mislead, or, ultimately, turn readers themselves into desiring subjects, upending the locus of desire. In short, the narrator is attempting to renegotiate the contract between reader and writer.

v. FREUDIAN SLIPPAGE

> We could never understand why the girls cared so much about being mature, or why they felt compelled to compliment each other, but sometimes, after one of us had read a long portion of the diary out loud, we had to fight back the urge to hug one another or to tell each other how pretty we were. We felt the imprisonment of being a girl, the way it made your mind active and dreamy, and how you ended up knowing which colors went together. (43)
>
> *The Virgin Suicides*
>
> Jeffrey Eugenides

The contract between writer and reader is based implicitly on the relationship between signifier and signified. Turning back to Freud, this leads us – from the frame of the case study's publication, through to Freud's transcription and translation – to the actual level of signification and Freud's method of reading signification at the level of the sign. From the beginning he says, "In Dora's case, thanks to her father's shrewdness which I have remarked upon more than once already, there was no need for me to look about for the points of contact between the circumstances of the patient's life and her illness, at all events in its most recent form" (55). From the start, Freud begins with the father's word. Only at the end of the case study does he note that

> it must be confessed that Dora's father was never entirely straightforward. He had given his support to the treatment so long as he could hope that I should "talk" Dora out of her belief that there was something more than a friendship between him and Frau K. His interest faded when he observed that it was not my intention to bring about that result. (150)

When Freud accepts Dora, as she is passed from her own father, he also to some degree accepts the father's way of reading Dora's illness. As Toril Moi points out, "Freud is a willing participant in the male power game conducted between Dora's father and Herr K." (330). Though, as he says above, Freud developed his own agenda, it is one that for the analysand must be shaped and pronounced by a grammar passed on by the father – a father's grammar if you will.

Despite this fact, Freud claims his reading privileges the analysand's discourse, that his analysis is defined by the content of the sessions:

> I can only assure the reader that I approached the study of the phenomena revealed by observation of the psychoneuroses without being pledged to any particular psychological system, and that I then proceeded to adjust my views until they seemed adapted for giving an account of the collection of facts which had been observed. I take no pride in having avoided speculation. (154)

That Freud was inspired and provoked by Dora's case I will not contest. But that his case study avoids speculation and did not impose theories or a psychological system onto the observation and interactions is absurd.

What characterizes Freud's writing, from the level of commentary to interpretation, is a curious aggression. At one point, in describing Dora's reaction to the kiss, he refers to her as "the little thumb-sucker" (110). In the midst of a long tirade interpreting Dora's desire, he asserts to Dora, "you have not even got the right to assert that it was out of the question for Herr K. to have had any such intention"(149), refusing her own possible interpretation of events. When Dora gives up something revealing during analysis, he notes it as "a fact which [he himself] did not fail to use against her" (94). And in looking back on analysis and noting a moment where he wishes his analysis had been more thorough, he laments that he "ought to have attacked this riddle" (162f). Perhaps the coda to this aggressive treatment occurs when Dora comes to him fifteen months after she ended the treatment, suffering from "right-sided facial neuralgia"(164), and Freud says, "I could not help smiling" (164) – and we can only guess that Dora was incapable of smiling back.

In contrast to this aggression towards Dora, he continues to be sensitive and self-conscious towards his reading audience as he struggles to account for the sexual content of their discussions and the possible repercussions from their being published. He claims he deliberately tailors his language to contain what sexual knowledge she already has:

> From the very beginning I took the greatest pains with this patient not to introduce her to any fresh facts in the region of sexual knowledge . . . Accordingly, I did not call a thing by its name until her allusions to it had become so unambiguous that there seemed very slight risk in translating them into direct speech. Her answer was always prompt and frank: she knew about it already. But the question of where her knowledge came from was a riddle which her memories were unable to solve. She had forgotten the source of all her information on the subject. (62)

Freud constructs Dora as already corrupt, and, indeed, claims that "where hysteria is found there can no longer be any question of 'innocence of mind'" (83). There was nothing to be done, and his language could not have corrupted what was already corrupted.

Yet, the peculiar thing, then, is that in response to Dora's "prompt and frank answers," Freud does not "translate them into direct speech." As already seen, he claims that

> it is possible for a man to talk to girls and women upon sexual matters of every kind without doing them harm and without bringing suspicion upon himself, so long as, in the first place, he adopts a particular way of doing it, and, in the second place, can make them feel convinced that it is unavoidable. (82)

Freud's adopted rhetoric first positions the hysteric as already corrupt, and then argues that one should approach her, when looking to discuss sexual matters, as though it is unavoidable. Certainly, he might have argued by extension, that very unavoidability must come from the fact that they are already corrupt. It seems even Freud is convinced it is unavoidable.

And yet, in practice his rhetoric is more metaphorical than direct, and more deferred, as a result, than unavoidable:

> the best way of speaking about such things is to be dry and direct; and that is at the same time the method furthest removed from the prurience with which the same subjects are handled in 'society', and to which girls and women alike are so thoroughly accustomed. I call bodily organs and processes by their technical names, and I tell these to the patient if they – the names, I mean – happen to be unknown to her. *J'appelle un chat un chat.*" (82)

To call a cat a cat, however, is to avoid the technical name, to rely on euphemism and metaphor. As Jane Gallop points out in *The Daughter's Seduction,*

> At the very moment he defines non-prurient language as direct and non-euphemistic, he takes a French detour into a figurative expression. By his terms, this French sentence would seem to be titillating, coy, flirtatious. And to make matters more juicy (less 'dry'), 'chat' or 'chatte' can be used as vulgar (vulvar) slang for the female genitalia. So in this gynaecological

> context, where he finds his innocence upon the direct use of technical terms, he takes a French detour and calls a pussy a pussy. (140)

What Freud promises will be direct, instead takes a detour to the vulgar, to some double-entendre more figurative and less literal. His language is anything but direct, and Dora is clear on this: "she was even constantly comparing me with [her father] consciously, and kept anxiously trying to make sure whether I was being quite straightforward with her, for her father, 'always preferred secrecy and roundabout ways'"(160). Freud's metaphoricity either unconsciously or inadvertently carries on the father's legacy. Perhaps, if Freud's conscious fear is that Dora will identify him with Herr K., his unconscious desire in the transference seems to be a wish to be identified with Dora's father –understandably, because despite the polyphony of desires Freud "reveals," the father seems to be (in his view) Dora's first and most constant desire. Regardless, Freud seems very concerned about his standing in the transference.

This concern, this display of Freud's own desire, is not surprising, and, indeed, is connected to Freud's method. He refuses to relinquish the issue around the source of Dora's sexual knowledge, attributes it more or less to her affliction, for he desires total knowledge. As Toril Moi argues,

> His aim is nothing less than the complete elucidation of Dora, despite his insistence on the fragmentary nature of his material. The absence of information on this one subject [the source of Dora's sexual knowledge] is

> thus tormenting, since it so obviously ruins the dream of completeness. (343)

The "dream of completeness" is only one aspect of Freud's counter-transference, and should not negate Freud's completion of the circuit of authority passed on by Dora's father, or what might just as well been Freud's desire to be needed and useful as a doctor – the counter-transference is in the end unknowable, yet this dream of completeness is certainly one aspect of it, and a consequential entrée for Freud's own desire to disrupt his work.

This desire leads Freud to reductive readings, and, clearly, attempts at fixing and interpreting Dora in her place. Unlike his early attempts to call *un chat un chat*, when Freud turns to the case study proper there is something undeniably direct and unavoidable in his interpretations, and in the manner in which he approaches Dora's dreams and unconscious processes. From the beginning, he argues that, "the concealed thought is usually the direct contrary of the supervalent one. Contrary thoughts are always closely connected with each other and are often paired off in such a way" (89) – whatever she says, she means the opposite. Further, he argues, he is "in the habit of regarding associations such as [the one Dora raised], which bring forward something that agrees with the content of an assertion of [his], as a confirmation from the unconscious of what [he had] said. No other kind of 'Yes' can be extracted from the unconscious; there is no such thing at all as an unconscious 'No'" (92) – the unconscious can only say yes, and it talks to him, agrees with him. And finally,

> The ‘No’ uttered by a patient after a repressed thought has been presented to his conscious perception for the first time does no more than register the existence of a repression and its severity . . . If this ‘No’, instead of being regarded as the expression of an impartial judgment (of which, indeed, the patient is incapable), is ignored, and if work is continued, the first evidence soon begins to appear that in such a case ‘No’ signifies the desired ‘Yes’. (93)

No means yes. Perhaps, this last is only disturbing as a signifying leap in an age where “no means no.” In any case, Freud’s signifying leap is direct and, since the unconscious cannot say no, unavoidable.

While his interpretive skills take leaps to his own specific and desired possibilities, in other places signification seems polymorphous, going off in all directions. One of the significant instances of this occurs is during Freud’s analysis of Dora’s repressed memories of her bed-wetting, and in the ensuing discussion about her loss of voice where he, in an odd turn, connects her symptoms and recollections to a sort of elemental symbolism. First he connects the reason her father woke her up as a child, as he does in the dream to save her from the fire to bed-wetting, which was connected to masturbation. So fire and water, as opposites, signify each other in the dream:

> The opposite of ‘wet’ and ‘water’ can easily be ‘fire’ and ‘burning’. The chance that, when they arrived at the place [L—], her father had expressed his anxiety at the risk of fire [p.100], helped to decide that the danger from

> which her father was to rescue her should be fire. The situation chosen for the dream-picture was based upon this chance, and upon the opposition to 'wet': 'There was a fire. Her father was standing beside her bed to wake her.' (128)

The fire he attempts to save her from in the dream signifies the repressed fear of wetting the bed and the repressed shame around the masturbation Freud associates with bed-wetting.

Freud then turns back to 'wet', moving associatively not to masturbation, but to what he perceives as Dora's fear of intercourse with a man:

> In consequence of certain connections which can easily be made from it, the word 'wet' served in the dream-thoughts as a nodal point between several groups of ideas. 'Wet' was connected not only with the bed-wetting, but also with the group of ideas relating to sexual temptation which lay suppressed behind the content of the dream. Dora knew that there was a kind of getting wet involved in sexual intercourse, and that during the act of copulation the man presented the woman with something liquid in the form of drops. She also knew that the danger lay precisely in that, and that it was her business to protect her genitals from being moistened. (128)

So the danger in the dream, which is ostensibly a fire, represents both a fear of wetting the bed and a fear of being "moistened" by a man. The moisture Dora associates with men has a double meaning according to Freud, and this double meaning is associated with the catarrh "which in her later years had no doubt possessed the same mortifying significance for her as the bed-wetting had in her childhood. Thus, 'wet' in this connection had the same meaning as 'dirtied'" (128). Furthermore,

> The two groups of ideas met in this one thought: 'Mother got both things from her father: the sexual wetness and the dirtying discharge.' Dora's jealousy of her mother was inseparable from the group of thoughts relating to her infantile love for her father which she summoned up for her protection. But this material was not yet capable of representation. (129)

It may be enough to imagine that the dream of her father waking her, saving her from the fire, was about her father having the power to save her, whether in relation to Herr K. or Freud, and in the dream the fulfilled wish is for him not to forsake her the way he keeps proving himself capable of doing.

In Freud's reading of the dream, however, she is a masturbating, bed-wetting, dirtied body. If this material was not ready for representation, what makes it so now, and has he done it justice? The dream is so significant and attractive to Freud because it is unrepresentable, because it is a key to Dora's attempts to realize herself as a subject, while having to contend with irreconcilable contradictions. There is no reason to believe Freud's interpretations have helped at all.

Yet Freud is the master of translation here, and he makes smaller leaps too. He argues that when the patient exclaims "I didn't think that' or 'I didn't think of that' [that it] . . . can be translated point-blank into: 'Yes, I was unconscious of that'" (92f.1). The point-blank interpretation becomes evident as a manner in which Freud – further to the response he imagines the unconscious makes to his assertions – looks for vindication or support from the unconscious, when he does not receive it from the conscious analysand. Indeed, he points out near the end of the case study that

> not only the briefness of the treatment (which hardly lasted three months) but another factor inherent in the nature of the case prevented results being brought about such as are attainable in other instances, where the improvement will be admitted by the patient and his relatives and will approximate more or less closely to a complete recovery. (157)

For Freud, as analyst, counter-transference usually involves some recognition of improvement from the patient or the relatives, and when the analysand's speech is ambiguous, Freud translates it into an affirming message from the unconscious.

It is difficult not to regard this desire for agreement as conjoined with the possibility of his unconscious wish to be desired in the way Dora desires her father, and, fair enough, Freud's unavoidable interpretations reach their limit in his interpretation of the transference, as he perceives it. When in her second dream she refuses to be accompanied he interprets it harshly, arguing that in its meaning there is "no doubt: 'Men are all so detestable that I would rather not marry. This is my revenge'"(162). He interprets this moment in her dream as a rejection of all men, himself included, and the word "revenge" connects to how he earlier describes her "thought of revenge against

Herr K., for which she found an outlet in her behaviour to me" (152), and how "her breaking off so unexpectedly, just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their highest, and her thus bringing those hopes to nothing – this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part"(150). Freud imagines, in all these instances, that Dora seeks revenge on him because she identifies him with Herr K., and yet the association he carefully avoids is the one between him and her father. He unconsciously reveals this when he writes of his own conclusion that Dora wants to kiss him: "I came to the conclusion that the idea had probably occurred to her one day during a session that she would like to have a kiss from me" (110). That idea, according to Freud, which must have occurred to her, associates Freud with her father, not with Herr K. And when he further points out that "[h]er father had once stood beside her bed, just as Herr K. had the day before, and had woken her up, with a kiss perhaps, as Herr K. may have meant to do" (124), Freud is setting up a more elaborate construction. Even this unconscious desire to be kissed, to have Dora want to kiss him, is deflected when he argues, based on this odd conjecture, that, similar to Dora's "reinforced train of thought about her father's relations with Frau K . . . she had at that point summoned up an infantile affection for her father so as to be able to keep her repressed love for Herr K. in its state of repression" (124). It is a complicated architecture here, where he associates himself with the father, the man most beyond reproach in Dora's mind, but then carefully marks it as an association summoned to repress the real desire to kiss Herr K. In the moment he marks the affection for the father, the possibility of a kiss from the father in the past, with the conscious desire to kiss Freud which must have occurred to her, he accomplishes two things: he draws attention to Dora's unconscious desire to kiss Herr K. and away from her conscious desire to kiss him (his own fantasy); and, in the moment he reveals the unconscious desire behind the kiss, he, in effect, represses his own desire to be kissed.

Freud would like to think that within the transference he made only one mistake, and that was in not recognizing the association he thinks Dora developed between him and Herr K. And yet, it is he himself who foreshadowed the end of the analytic relationship; it is he who seemingly planted the seeds of departure in Dora's mind, and he who manifested his own fear about the abrupt end of the analytic relationship – his ultimate rejection. During the analysis of the first dream, though included only in a "repressed" footnote, he tells us how he informed her that

> the re-appearance of the dream in the last few days forces me to the conclusion that you consider that the same situation has arisen once again, and that you have decided to give up the treatment – to which, after all, it is only your father who makes you come. (106f.1)

In essence, when he connects this in the footnote to transference, "a theme which is of the highest practical and theoretical importance, but into which I shall not have much further opportunity of entering in the present paper"(106f.1), he ostensibly lies, for he will go on at length, preoccupied with it, and he is noting this as a moment when he knew Dora would leave, as though it might provide some consolation that he knew, but could not know what to do. Dora herself makes no mention of leaving until the end, when she confesses, “Do you know that I am here for the last time today?”(146), to which Freud – contradicting what he apparently deciphered and disseminated from her first dream – responds, “How can I know, as you have said nothing to me about it?” (146). Dora explains, “Yes, I made up my mind to put up with it till the New Year. But I shall wait no longer than that to be cured” (146). We will never know when she made up her mind not to carry on with analysis further than that point, but it is apparent, from Freud himself, that she had never mentioned it before, and indeed, the end of analysis was only brought up by Freud, as a means of interpreting her first dream. Yet, ultimately, his presentation of the end of analysis is an unconscious confession of his fear of and desire for a connection between himself and Herr K. Freud fears and yet desires that Dora would leave the way she left Herr K. at the lake -- disgusted with him, and yet, as Freud’s convenient theories of the repressed support, desiring him.

vi. BLOWN LANGUAGE

What story needs to get told
depends less on words than on signs
depends on what is encrypted on my face (91)

Designs from the Interior
John Barton

In *Blown Figures*, Isobel's desire for presence meets with resistance on many fronts, but, as discussed above, language proffers itself as most troubling since it entices her to tell her story, but she easily meets the limits of language and cannot represent the contradictions with which she is struggling towards subjectivity. This frustration with language, her attempts to push it to signify, to embody her story, is startlingly similar to Jacques Lacan's discussion of signification in the analytic relationship, in his essay, "Speech in the Transference."

Lacan discusses Freud's case study of Dora, the problem of transference, and St. Augustine's "De locutionis significatione," bringing together a body of discussion that brings us to two useful emphases at this point: how transference relates to the arbitrariness of the sign, and the difference between "full" and "empty" speech. Beirnaert tells us from the start of his dialogue with Lacan that "the thematic axis, which determines the direction the entire dialogue takes, is that language transmits the truth from without through words which sound without, but the disciple always sees the truth within" (250). Their discussion will focus mostly on the first part of Augustine's text, "Disputatio de locutionis significatione," which itself is divided into two sections, ""De signis," which Beirnaert says is "poorly translated as – Of the value of words" (250), and Signa ad discendum nihil valent," which he translates as "signs are of no use in learning"(250). Lacan directs his dialogue with Beirnaert to centre on two basic questions: "What is the difference between communication by signals and the exchange of interhuman speech?"(250); and what is "the relation of signs to signifiable things"(257)? His intent here, it seems, is to make it clear that in transference the analyst and analysand do not leave the symbolic realm, that it is not a question of dealing with the Imaginary register.

Although Lacan refers to Freud and in particular to his theories of investment from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he interpretively emphasizes the difference between signifier and sign so as to complicate the role of the analyst as reader:

> Each time you will get caught up in paths which are always dead ends, as is clearly seen in view of the impasses in which analytic theory finds itself today, if you fail to take account of the fact that signification only ever refers back to itself, that is to say to another signification. (238)

What this indicates, counter to Freud's rhetoric of making pieces fit, and his search for the conclusive reading, is that there is no end to signification, no end to association.

Lacan argues further that, "[e]ach time that we are obliged, in the analysis of language, to look for the signification of a word, the only correct method is to enumerate all of its usages"(238). This emphasis on signification and the importance of an ambivalent interpretation leads us to begin to understand the nature of language and its relationship to the unconscious. Freud, with Dora, read her so literally, it only leaves us to wonder if he had read more associatively rather than reductively, what sort of reading would he had come up with?

Part of what Lacan is also concerned with here is the relationship between the speaker, speech, and the world in which he or she speaks. He argues that "[s]peech is essentially the means of gaining recognition" (240), and that "as soon as it wants to have something believed and demands recognition, speech exists" (240). He makes a further distinction between the desire for recognition and the conditions in which the subject believes it is being recognized. Indeed, this distinction, for Lacan, is the same as the distinction he makes between "full" and "empty" speech.

This distinction, in a sense, is a question of proper witnessing. Lacan argues that, "[e]veryday speech all the time runs up against failure of recognition [*méconaissance*], which is the source of *Verneinung*" (270), which is elsewhere translated as "error" (260). Here Lacan turns back to Freud and Freud's dream theories to illustrate their connection with transference:

> But even before he had become aware of the existence of transference, Freud had already designated it. In the *Traumdeutung*, there is, in effect,

> already a definition of the *Übertragung* as a function of the double level of speech, as I have put it to you. There are parts of the discourse which are disinvested of significations which another signification, the unconscious signification, will take from behind. Freud demonstrates it with respect to the dream, and I have pointed it out to you in some striking slips. (280)

The three symptoms Freud related to this process, and that Lacan picks up here are the same that "Saint Augustine orients his entire dialectic around . . . these three poles [being] error, mistake, ambiguity of speech" (260).

Full speech, then, relies upon association, upon "error, mistake, [and] ambiguity of speech" to gain recognition, and as in the comparison to Freud's dream process above, full speech is speech that is invested with content other than its own. Lacan's point is that full speech, as it relates to transference, is not anymore imaginary than empty speech. As Dylan Evans points out, "Full speech is also called 'true speech' since it is closer to the enigmatic truth of the subject's desire: 'Full speech is speech which aims at, which forms, the truth such as it becomes established in the recognition of one person by another. Full speech is speech which performs [*qui fait acte*]' (S1, 107)" (191). There is, in full speech, an inarticulatable desire, and it is connected to the other to which one speaks. In the analytic relationship this role falls to the analysand, yet, paradoxically, in the case of Dora, though she should ostensibly be the subject of full speech, she is instead the other, the one which Freud's desire demands attention from front and centre.

Yet, Lacan is not entirely countering what happened in the case with Dora; there are limits to his campaign for an ambivalent reading. As revealed in his reaction to Leclaire – who misinterpreted Lacan, and who was using terminology of which Lacan did not approve – though Lacan is arguing for a limitless signification, he still intends there to be limits for interpretation and analysis. Yet the precaution here in emphasizing signification's unending process is, it seems, to create a forum for interpretation which is open to other readings, and more ambivalent than traditional psychoanalytic readings have been. Though Freud prided himself on the fact that the reason Dora left was because he had discovered her secret, the sort of signification that Lacan discusses shows us that Dora's exit appears to be an escape from an interpretative and analytic system which was becoming more and more closed, without an exit – she took the only one she could find.

vii. THE RHYTHMS OF GOODBYE

What is it about meter and cadence and rhythm that makes their makers go mad? (48)

Girl, Interupted

Susanna Kaysen

How am I supposed to heal if I can't feel time?

Memento

In *Blown Figures*, what the tri-partite structure and language slips all construct is Isobel's geographical and nostalgic journey as she travels from Canada to Africa. Isobel reveals that "her most calm moments (with the exception of airplane travel) were when she was traveling between A and B, between the past and the future" (145). Temporally, the present does not exist for Isobel, except as a space that opens up in the process of traveling, the process of traveling between the past and future. She travels palimpsistically, writing the present over a heavily wrought past, and the future can only exist under the possibility that she will exorcise the ghosts of her lost foetuses who haunt her at every turn.

Possibility, then, is both temporal and geographical in her mind, when she asserts that "[s]omewhere in this land there is a sacred village in which no one is allowed to die. Nor is any woman there allowed to bleed" (337). Yet even this utopian sacred place is an ambiguous space, where no one is allowed to die – and in this palimpsistic layer it seems Isobel is hoping this means the foetuses will get to live – at the cost of women giving up menstruation or the ability to give birth. Death can only not exist if life leaves with it.

So, by extension, Isobel's journey, the one which the unnamed narrator and the absent / present Miss Miller reflect upon, is defined by a constrained identity which threatens to subsume her. She repeatedly returns to the idea of breath, explaining that "the act of taking air into the lungs is inspiration" (104) and there is "the hot breath of zoo animals—huh huh huh huh – and there was no wind. She stood at the rail in her striped dress trying to be calm" (105) – the rest of the world is full of breath, but she is agitated, unable to find hers.

Twice she repeats, "Zhuh nuh puh pas rehs-pee-reh"(108) (139), which is a sort of phonetic way of saying she cannot breathe, and then, says, "Excusez-moi. J'ai peur. Je ne puis pas respirer" (165): excuse me, I am afraid. I cannot breathe. As discussed above, near the beginning of the text she defines "inspiration," and then near the end she defines "exhaust": "*Exhaust* (L.) from L. *exhaustus*, pp. of *exhuire*, to draw out, drink up, -- L. *ex* – out; *hauire*, to draw water" (441). For Isobel and by extension the unnamed narrator, there is a great deal of concern around the distinction between inside and outside, and by correlation this points to a fraught distinction between their sense of what is conscious and unconscious. Isobel's inability to breathe concurrently demarcates her sense of the restraining, repressing forces which define her gender, her mourning, and her fear that what has been repressed might not maintain its interiority, might slip. Thus the warning, "Mind you come up the regular way, don't get blown up!" (296).

This tension between inside and outside and her sense of the forces repressing the memories around her failed relationships and pregnancies are also expressed in her sense of her own body. As already discussed, at the beginning of her journey she stands on the deck of the ship and "sees edges" (15)(32), and on a crazy cab ride, "Isobel's fingers disappeared down to the first joint, then the second. Soon her hands would be gone entirely. By the time they reached the border she would be all gone. There would be nobody. No body. Personne" (168). Here the disintegration she feels has a trajectory which is connected to the border she will soon cross, and her body is connected to her person. Later she notices, "She is dissolving again. Her arm, which lay mostly outside the bus window, resting on the window sill, had detached itself and taken on a life of its own, a separateness, which terrified her . . . it was not her arm but someone else's arm. An arm that might rise up and strike her" (227). Even later she notices, this time almost casually, that "she was dissolving again" (463). These moments of dissolution mark the places where she is most conscious of not knowing her own edges, of not being able to negotiate safely between the boundaries that separate her from the rest of the world, and the boundaries which separate her present tense from the past.

Isobel understands this dissolution partly through film metaphors that visually signify her relationship to her surroundings. She admits that the "people around her were as insubstantial as people in a film – she knew that the mission was not a real mission but a false-fronted movie set" (195). This becomes a question of the relationship between herself, her body and what is "other":

> It seems to Isobel that she is not so much passing through all these places as that they are passing through her, as when one puts one's arm and hand, for fun, between the projector and the screen. Somebody's view of the Villa Borghese becomes part of one's arm. There, see the golden hairs glistening on the pines. (164)

Through the image of the hair with the pines, a strange grafting represents how Isobel who once was seeing edges is now unable to decipher where she begins and the landscape ends. What is other is slowly subsuming what is "self," ironically "incorporating" her own body into otherness.

Her body's own otherness, its contradictory gender associations have been the site for Isobel's struggle, her attempts to reconcile constructions of gender for the most part beyond her control and derived from sometimes contradictory cultures (Canada, England, Africa) and locations (lover, mother, daughter). Caught between feelings of romantic rejection and struggling with her body's own rejection of a foetus she genders as male, she tries to reconcile what seem like absurdly opposite bodies into one she can identify with.

Yet, on another level, the most alien body for her is the domestic body back in Canada, which was supposed to live out the life of wife and mother, without having or being able to reconcile the losses she felt unable to mourn: her two lost foetuses, her lost romance, and at the same time, the loss of the woman she was before such losses. This is partly what leads to her husband's rather Freudian slip:

> And all the time Jason, fed-up, impatient, unwilling to be dragged down to the underwater depths where you gasped and struggled and thrust forth one frantic hand for help. "Isobel doesn't live, she exits." His trouble and strife, his wife. (218)

It is a slip she is unable to relinquish, so she repeats it, with a slight difference: "Isobel doesn't live, you know, she exits" (232). Later, the narrator recalls for her how,

> At PTA meetings, at the Christmas Concerts, at Family Fun Night, you stayed always near the EXIT sign, shifting from one foot to the other, waiting for the demons to grab the microphone . . . and scream through the static:
>
> OWUDIFO!
>
> OWUDIFO!
>
> Murderer!
>
> And everyone would know immediately that it was she, Isobel, to whom they were referring. (438)

Jason slips on the truth that Isobel dwells near exit signs because of the guilt she feels about the past that she cannot reconcile in the domestic, familial present. Later, connecting the slip to an earlier episode where she had run away from the family, she repeats the line once more, "'Isobel doesn't live, she exits.' Perhaps it wasn't a slip after all" (478). The line has stuck with her and she has repeated it for it holds what she knows about her inability to live embodied in the present because of what she has not been able to reconcile from the past.

The past surfaces in many ways here, but it is rhythm that begins to unlock her reminiscences most strongly. Firstly through rhyming, and the rhythms of nursery rhymes (247 – 266). Then through the subtle influence of the tribal drums that "went on and on *Da* da da *Da* da da *Da* da da *Da* da *Da* and her weary eyes closed" (195). The paradox which rules this text, then, is that the source of Isobel's trouble – so many irreconcilable bodies – is also the exit she is looking for, the conduit to what she has left unexpressed and must still find a way to embody. The narrator notes that, "[b]oth sender and receiver have to be familiar with the phrases drummed" (239). The window to what this rhythm means to her comes from a memory of a funeral she and Jason once attended:

> These people, with their elaborate rituals for birth and death, their singing and dancing, their lamentations, their drumming . . . two sets of drummers so that the terrible urgency of the death-ritual should never flag. DaDaDa/Dadada/Dadada until Isobel, already overpowered by the heat and crowd, had thought she would go mad. . . . A group of old women, waving white hankerchiefs, danced the *adwoa* dance of mourning, over and over again . . . . [Isobel] had wanted to dance – her body and her head were full of the rhythm and the sound of mourning, yet she could not. Instead, she asked Jason to take her home. (485)

Isobel refers to them as "these people," and denotes the distinction between herself and the locals who have rituals and communal ways of mourning. She is attracted to the "dance of mourning," both her "body and her head," but she cannot give herself over to it. Consumed as she is by a series of failed mournings, suffered in private, unarticulated. "I ate the child in my womb," she said. "Since then I have never been happy"(518).

As she travels further psychologically and geographically the drumming gets more insistent, and as the unnamed narrator's power begins to wane, she notes that Isobel "was no longer afraid" (521), and in the midst of a ritual, she "was gently stripped of her dirty, fear-soaked dress" (522). It is then that she suddenly understands the drums:

> She did not know how it was that she understood the language of the drums and of the horn but the strange insistent sounds Momra! Momra! Mmere dane dane! which went into her heart and her feet as rhythm, which drew her body along as a string, went into her head as words. (522)

The rhythm draws her to face the unexpressed mourning, yet the ritual she finds cannot help her: "Isobel," [the priest] said, "It is too late. The witches have already eaten up your *kra*" (526). In the ritual she is not looking to let go of what she has lost, she is looking to find it again. The public rituals she attends, whether imaginary or real, do not intervene to help her express her failed mourning, and so the narrator notes, "Isobel remained elsewhere"(525).

viii. GOODBYE HERR F.

> There is in this no point of departure simple as leave-taking, a glorious view many thanks goodbyegoodbye, something always left behind, rooms thieve her as she sleeps . . . . That is the end, my dear professor, and what, as you have said to me so often, have your recollections to say to this? I am hunted for my skin now, unbalanced but within reason, I will not be deprived so easily of my illness.[36]
>
> *Taking the Waters*
>
> Méira Cook

The double-binds with which Isobel struggles, her own contradictory otherness, directly resembles the double-bind Dora faces in analysis with Freud. Dora's first step towards leaving the analysis is to become what Freud most desires – the perfect object of analysis. In these last stages of the analysis, Freud reductively points out to her, "Perhaps you do not know that 'jewel-case' . . . is a favourite expression for the same thing that you alluded to not long ago by means of the reticule you were wearing – for the female genitals, I mean" (105). Dora responds, "I knew you would say that"(104), and though this could mean, I am now familiar with your reductive interpretations, or I now know how you are victim of your own metaphoricity, Freud directly responds, "That is to say, you knew that it was so – The meaning of the dream is now becoming clearer" (105). He further footnotes that her response is "a very common way of putting aside a piece of knowledge that emerges from the repressed" (105 f. 2). Perhaps the reader should not make too much of the fact that he does not designate "her" unconscious, or the analysand's, that he leaves this open and ambiguous.

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[36] There are no page references in Cook's chapbook *Taking the Waters*. This quotation comes from the final letter in the book, a goodbye letter from Dora to Freud but signed by Cook – a suitable and flirtatious gesture for what Cook's narrative has accomplished.

At any rate, this moment, when Dora predicts what Freud would say, how he would interpret her words and her dream, marks a crossroads in the analysis. She has learned how to construct a Freudian reading. From this moment on, she quickly becomes, almost pornographically, the perfect analytic object. When he flauntingly asks her, "And now, what have your recollections to say to this?" Dora replies, "I know nothing about myself" (108), then gives Freud the content he is looking for when she abruptly recollects that she did bed-wet. She has embraced Freud's double fantasy here: she concurrently renounces that she is the one who knows herself, leaving him that position, while she corroborates his interpretation of her. From this moment on, she falls further and further into being the analytical fantasy object, as Freud notes: "And Dora disputed the fact no longer" (145). At another moment he points out that she "listened to [him] without any of her usual contradictions" (150). She is becoming a screen, without flaw, upon which Freud can project his analytic fantasies.

While her apparent silence at the end of the analysis might ostensibly construct her as passive – and by this I mean as an inadequate and remote analytic object – she becomes active as a signifier. Her resistances to Freud's interpretation slip away and she becomes the analytic object extraordinaire. She moves to the level of signification, and her parting gift to Freud is the perfect recollection. It is in the final session, the one where she confesses that she has decided not to carry the analysis any further, that she tells Freud she had made up her mind "[a] fortnight ago" (146). This means something to Freud, who replies that "[t]hat sounds just like a maidservant or a governess – a fortnight's notice" (146), but Dora has not given him a fortnight's notice, she has only given him this day. Still, she offers him this: "There was a governess who gave notice with the K.s, when I was on my visit to them that time at L--, by the lake" (146) and then proceeds to tell Freud how that governess had had an affair with Herr K., and how he had shunned her afterwards. Freud says this information helped "to solve problems which had previously been raised" (147), and he is able "able to answer [her] question" (148). This one figure of the governess connects together what Freud has interpreted around the suitor / engineer, the suicide note, the disgust Dora felt at the lake towards Herr K., and her frustration with her parents. Freud, in his analytical fervour, takes Dora's voice, acts her part: "'Does he dare,' you said to yourself, 'treat me like a governess, like a servant?'" (147); and again, in a footnote at the end of the case study: "Since you have treated me like a servant, I shall take no more notice of you, I shall go my own way by myself, and not marry" (152f). As Dora gets increasingly more silent, Freud speaks for her more directly, in a cross-gendered turn.

If how the case study is written is any indication of their interactions in this last session, then it seems that, after Dora recollected the governess, Freud did almost all the talking. He is at times there at his most emphatic, and his most reductive. This, too, might be further evidence of Freud's manic desire for complete knowledge. His final reading of her desire is that she "took the affair with Herr K. much more seriously than [she had] been willing to admit so far" (149) and that she pre-empted a probable marriage proposal:

> Incidentally, the scheme would by no means have been impracticable. Your father's relations with Frau K. – and it was probably only for this reason that you lent them your support for so long – made it certain that her consent to a divorce could be obtained; and you can get anything you like out of your father. Indeed, if your temptation at L—had had a different upshot, this would have been the only possible solution for all the parties concerned. (149)

One cannot help wondering if Freud has been present for the actual analysis, he is so inattentive to the contradictory forces at work here. He himself has proposed that Dora had an affection beyond reproach for Frau K., he himself previously noted how Dora felt exchanged, given away so her father could pursue his affections for Frau K. Here Freud accuses Dora of having in her hands the "only possible solution," but it is her repressed desire for Herr K. that prevented her from making all parties concerned happy.

Indeed if Dora chooses to give him this recollection, the piece that makes everything fit nicely the way he wants it, it may very well be because she foresees that she has no choice. Up until this point the analysis has either made her admit or suggested to her that she is a thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, masturbating, repressed lesbian with no sense for numbers. In the mess of things that Freud constructs around Dora, is it any wonder that she chooses silence and gives him, on the final day of their sessions, the one recollection that will give him a clinical picture which will in some way satisfy him?

What is perfect, in the end, is Dora's recollection of the governess, the figure of servitude. As Toril Moi points out, "Dora was the name Freud's own sister, Rosa, had foisted on her maid in place of her real one, which also was Rosa. So Ida Bauer, in a bitter historical irony, was made famous under the name of a servant after all" (347). And, taking Moi's analysis another step, the name Dora is the insignia of repression and the slippage of a name. Just as Freud's sister feared having the same name as her maid, Freud fears his reflection in Ida Bauer. The figure of the maid perfectly provides Freud with a figure of his own analytic frustration and countertransference –when she abandons their session, he feels used, powerless to change his position, treated like a servant too. Like his sister, Freud uses the name 'Dora' to denote difference, make Ida other, and avoid his own reflection. The governess / servant figure which completes the picture for him is thus a nice little reflection of himself.

ix. TALKING ABOUT EXITS

> *He had written on the last page of his field book:* I have come to the end of words. *Yes, and the fucking bastard had let me prepare the canoe, had let me send him out onto the water. And we found the canoe all right; at least we didn't lose eighty dollars worth of canoe. But we never found the body. Thank God for small mercies.* (269)
>
> *Badlands*
>
> Robert Kroetsch

Isobel's inability to breathe is remarkably close to Dora's loss of voice. Similarly, Lacan draws attention to the importance of speech in the transference, and theorizes the difference between full speech and empty speech. Where breath marks a desire for presence, an attempt for the body to find some entitlement in the world, for Lacan this is the level of speech, and even bodies operate within the symbolic and can achieve full or empty speech. What he draws attention to is the context in which the subject uses speech, whether or not there are witnesses, and how they are witnessing.

Yet this also becomes a display of how strong the urge to transference is, because refusing the role of one presumed to know ultimately makes him only seem more knowing. Gallop travels to France to meet Lacan, "for him to approve [her]" (35).

Felman describes how reading Lacan's writing is "like surrendering ourselves to a blindness that works us over and thinks us through without our necessarily ever achieving an exhaustive understanding of it" (139-140). The 'seminar' – an oral forum where Lacan seemed more comfortable than in publishing – ends up being fetishized, transcribed, translated and published. And what does that say about full speech? He might have been heard, but without the reader being present, for his gestures, his humour, the laughter in the room, how full is the speech, how adequate the reading? Transference here oddly fetishizes the lack of presence in the 'seminar' and reads full speech into it.

I am reading Lacan's rhetorical position as "The Subject not Presumed to Know" as a subject position in the analytical relationship, a strongly perverse one at that. His anticipation and refutation of the other's desire for the Law of the Father (in the guise of the subject presumed to know) paradoxically invokes the Law of the Father. The transference in the analytical relationship, then, is his, and the academic urge to publish the 'seminar', the strength and fanaticism of his audience, is the corresponding countertransference. That what he anticipates finds a corresponding 'truth' should do nothing to negate Lacan's perverse transference. Whether or not the other wants him to be the subject presumed to know, he anticipates and loudly proclaims his own desire (as performative) to be the desired object and to concurrently refuse such a position.

Lacan's desire for the audience's desire, and his urge to refute it, is in his analytical relationship with the audience its own form of resistance and indeed seems implicitly responsible for his typographic silence – his resistance to being published. His evocation of the audience's desire for the author function here becomes an overt demonstration of transference:

> the subject, settling down to his labour, over and over again, acknowledging his history in the first person, makes progress into the order of fundamental symbolic relations in which he has to find the time, resolving the halts and the inhibitions which make up the super-ego. You need time for that.
>
> If the echoes of the discourse come together too quickly from point *O'* – that is to say if the transference gets too intense – a critical phenomenon takes place, evoking resistance, resistance in the most acute form in which it manifests itself – silence. So you see why, don't you, as Freud says, the transference becomes an obstacle when it's excessive. (284)

This obstacle and the resistance that is silence are Lacan's as he resists the author function. His refusal or inability to speak what he knows and his insistence on proclaiming that he is not "The subject presumed to know" marks the point in analysis when the transference, his fear of what the other wants to know, becomes an obstacle to his own knowing.

Silence is not in itself the negation or obstruction of the transference, though. As Lacan himself argues, silence is its own form of acknowledgement:

> It must also be said, that, if this moment comes at an opportune time, the silence takes on its full value as silence – it is not simply negative, but has value as a beyond of speech. Certain moments of silence in the transference represent the most vivid apprehension of the presence of the other as such. (284)

The absence of analysands in Lacan's work can be read as an extension of this silence and this absence as "the most vivid apprehension of the presence of the other" – Lacan's own resistance to what he perceives to be the other's desire.

Similarly, then, Lacan's resistances, Dora's agreement – her silence with regards to her real feelings – and the unnamed narrator's silence at the end of *Blown Figures* and Isobel's blank page can all be read as attempted exits. These attempts to disappear are not merely negative values, the attempt to destroy presence, but the absolute valorization of the other. Just as the melancholic's incorporation of the other can be read as a triumph of the other over the ego (as discussed in the first chapter), here absence, departure, and the blank page mark the refusal to dialogue with the other, and the acceptance of its hold on the subject.

Earlier in the chapter, I discussed how the unnamed narrator of *Blown Figures* tries to control Isobel. I suggested there that this was concurrent with her losing control, and how at the close of the novel that she has shrunk, that she almost apologetically recognizes that she has played a part in the growing madness, and she almost says goodbye to Isobel, wishing her luck and hope on her journey. Dissolving, asphyxiating, unable to tell past from the present, the non-sequitur that was once a slip now structures the slip into madness. Madness here is the loss of the unnamed narrator's commentary: it is a dissolve to blackness, it is an exit, where the final black screen in the movie theatre marks absolute time and Isobel, the narrator, and Miss Miller disappear.

At the end of the narrative, the narrator twice makes a strong reference to time, first just before the ritual, when the rhythm has affected her the most: "The street is filling up with mourning people. She nods again. It's time" (494). After the ritual fails, at the very end of the text, in a postscript she yells, "TIME! YOU MONSTROUS MOLE. WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?" (547). The text ends with a question screamed out, searching for an answer, accusing time of being the perpetrator. The narrator and Isobel have fought against time, fought to undo what was done, fought to find some way to represent the unrepresentable, but in the end, just as the ritual failed to bring back the "kra," so does the writing.

Blown Figures has never received as much critical attention as *Mrs Blood.* When critics do write about it, they mention its structural play, noting that it is "almost a montage of stories rather than a novel" (Prentice 75). Barbara Godard comes closest to contending with the ending to the novel when she points out that the book "ends with five white pages, the hidden iceberg of the story" (46). She will only add that "Isobel's success . . . is uncertain – do those blank pages mean fullness of experience, the ineffable, or do they mean naught?" (52), and that "this is a story about the miscarriage of creation" (51). For Godard, the five last pages are the hidden iceberg, they are the hidden content.

That the novel doesn't find traditional catharsis, that it is not easily interpretable, probably accounts for the lack of attention *Blown Figures* has received.

Yet a comparison to the hero's tragic end in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* might give us another perspective on Isobel's blank conclusion. Even though Macbeth knows the prophecies, and knows he is about to die, he continues to fight. When Isobel feels disappointed by the Western religion she finds at the mission, when she finds no absolution or catharsis from the mourning rituals she embraces in the local culture, she does not stop her journey; it continues into the whiteness of the page. This also evokes the end of *Doctor Zhivago*, where the heroine walks out into the whiteness of the blizzard, most surely to her death, but she walks on anyway. Or it might evoke a Hollywood movie like *Thelma and Louise*, where the two heroines, trapped by the cops and facing certain imprisonment choose to drive off the cliff hand in hand – again, death is the choice, just as Isobel's white pages might signify oblivion. All three of these works of fiction end not with the dead and mangled faces of their heroines, but with the moment of their greatest gesture: their continued drive to fight despite the futility. It is for Shakespeare the definition of a tragic hero.

CHAPTER THREE: STYLE AND STRUCTURE IN ANNE CARSON'S *AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF RED*, JACQUES HASSOUN'S CASE STUDY OF 'JANUS', AND DARIAN LEADER'S "THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION FOR KLEIN AND LACAN"

PREFATORY NOTES:

> Is perversion a sexual act? Is perversion an aggressive act? Do all sexual acts invoke a moral response? Are all aggressive acts unpleasant? What determines the particular fusion of sexuality and aggression that characterizes perversion?
>
> *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Perversion*
>
> Claire Pajaczkowska

> What is perversion? It is not simply an aberration in relation to social criteria, an anomaly contrary to good morals, although this register is not absent, nor is it an atypicality according to natural criteria, namely that it more or less derogates from the reproductive finality of the sexual union. It is something else in its very structure.
>
> *Seminar 1*
>
> Jacques Lacan

Unpacking and defining a term like perversion carries with it an imperative. Few psychoanalytic terms have been used to such a punitive and marginalizing extent. Indeed the word is deemed by many to be antiquated and potentially an "anachronism" (Apter 311). Even as this chapter attempts to define what later psychoanalysts like Lacan, and feminist theorists like Elizabeth Grosz and Teresa de Lauretis, mean by perversion, I am aware that as a diagnostic term it cannot escape its own history. Yet its clinical structure is useful here for our explorations of melancholia in relation to the Lacanian structures. Some definitions are in order then.

For Freud, at least initially, "Any sexual activity engaged in for a purpose other than that of reproduction is perverse" (Fink 165). As a nosological category this was not very useful or specific, but created an umbrella term for the plethora of perversions psychoanalysis was naming: "pedophilia, frotteurism, toucherism, transvestic fetishism, and so on" (Fink 165). As Fink argues, this naming was just Psychoanalysis, "Doing what Freud tells us it does best, giving new 'names to different [behaviors] but saying nothing further about them'" (165). To make the term more confusing, Freud argues in the same essay, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, that "Children can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition" (1905, 109).[37] If it is innate in our disposition, then this nosological category is of little more use than as moralizing force for when sexuality strays from the re-productive norm.

For Lacan, on the other hand, perversion is not a behaviour, or an act, it is a structure. As Fink argues, "Most clinicians do not see many patients who can accurately be qualified as perverts, psychoanalytically speaking . . . . when evaluated in terms of the Lacanian criteria [he has] been presenting . . . the vast majority of the people commonly referred to as perverts in fact turn out to be neurotics or psychotics" (165). The structural distinction for Lacan, according to Evans, has a two-fold criteria: first, that the subject disavows castration, and second, the manner in which "the subject locates himself as object of the drive, as the means of the other's jouissance" (139). This structural distinction potentially allows an analyst to make an important distinction based on the analysand's stage of psychic development and not based on specific behaviors and their moral acceptability.

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[37] It should undermine his argument that he goes on to point out that, "In this respect children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman in whom the same polymorphously perverse disposition persists" (1905, 109).

Lacan's theories redefined disavowal and moved it into accordance with his three clinical categories of neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. Where "Freud had only linked disavowal to one form of perversion, Lacan makes it the fundamental operation in all forms of perversion. And whereas Freud had also linked disavowal with psychosis, Lacan limits disavowal exclusively to the structure of perversion" (43). The structure disavowal, though, makes its most important change in the de-literalizing of perversion: "Whereas Freud relates disavowal to the perception of the absence of the penis in women, Lacan relates it to the realization of the absence of the phallus in the Other" (44). This distinction locates perversion not in a scopic moment, but in a relation of power and infant development in which there is also the later resonance of that structure.

It is perhaps easiest to understand perversion's disavowal when compared to neurosis's repression and psychosis' foreclosure. In the fundamental moment, where the subject faces the "the absence of the phallus in the Other" (44), each category defines itself based on its fundamental reaction. The neurotic represses the knowledge, shifting it from the conscious to the unconscious by making something stand in or replace the signifier. The neurotic exclaims, "I'm going to pretend I didn't see that, but it will surely come back to haunt me."

The psychotic distinguishes himself from the neurotic and the pervert through its operation of foreclosure. As Fink describes it, "Foreclosure involves the radical rejection of a particular element from the symbolic order (that is, from language), and not just any element: it involves the element that in some sense grounds or anchors the symbolic order as a whole. When this element is foreclosed, the entire symbolic order is affected" (79). The psychotic exclaims, "Nope. Means nothing to me." In contrast, the pervert recognizes what he has seen, but seems unable to entirely repress the signifier, instead recognizing it and denying it, creating a split ego. For the pervert, "Yep and nope," is his reaction – seeing is not believing."

Disavowal is most obvious in the pervert's fetish. As Evans points out, "the fetish is a symbolic substitute for the mother's missing phallus" (139). The fetish itself symbolizes the failure of repression, the refusal. The fetish object stands for the missing phallus, but does not replace it, cannot replace it because it refers to the absence of the phallus.

Perversion's location to the drive and position as "object of the drive, as the means of the other's jouissance" (139) operates as essentially another split tactic to cope with the absence of the phallus in the Other. Whereas disavowal tries to compensate for the castration and simultaneously tries to recognize it, the pervert's position as object of the drive attempts to satisfy the Other. In the adult, this bears a striking resemblance to the infantile perversion that wishes to be the object the mother desires. Securing oneself to the mother in this fashion holds out the possibility of returning to a place before the recognition of one's separateness from the mother, the Other, and for the pervert the mother /Other's desire seems the best way to do this.

Yet, as Fink argues, the pervert's desire is misleading. It's not truly the Other's pleasure that is his or her objective. Through his example of the masochist, Fink points out that "[a]s already discussed several times, fantasy is essentially a lure that conceals the subject's mainspring, masking what truly makes the subject 'tick'" (186-187). The masochist's position in relation to the Other's jouissance is a fantasy first and foremost, and this drama the masochistic pervert stages, as is the nature of fantasies, masks another drama playing itself out subtextually:

> Like the fetishist, the masochist is in need of separation, and his solution is to orchestrate a scenario whereby it is his partner, acting as Other, who lays down the law – the law that requires him to give up a certain jouissance. A partner is not necessarily, however, immediately willing to legislate, give orders, make decrees, and so on in a relationship; a partner must often be pushed to some extent, bullied into declaring limits, into expressing his will that things be one way and not another, that things go no further. (187)

The masochist, Fink argues, attempts to bring about the law in the Other, thus, in the case of the masochist, the pervert searches not for the other's pleasure, but the Other's anxiety – he searches to provoke the law in the Other. The neurotic might also seek to provoke the Other, but the tell tale sign is in the reaction to the Law when it comes. The neurotic might question the Other's authority, but the masochist does not – all is as he expected, no, knew it to be. While neurosis is characterized by a question, perversion is characterized by the lack of a question; the pervert does not doubt that his acts serve the jouissance of the Other.

Where for Freud, homosexuality was strictly a perversion – hence the term's historical baggage – in the Lacanian conception of it this is not strictly so and, as already discussed, it is a matter of a certain structure and relationship to the Other. Feminist critics like Elizabeth Grosz argue against the strict gendering still implicit in Lacan, and the theoretical work required to understand perversion free of its moralizing and discriminatory history is beyond the scope of this project, though it remains a concern and a site of question in the work.

Given the autobiographical aspects of the previous two novels this dissertation has looked at, the third chapter's focus on Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, in many ways her least autobiographical work, might seem problematic. Of course there is Geryon's autobiography in the tale, but that is a much more indirect exploration of the trials and tribulations of self-representation (though no less acute or insightful). *Autobiography of Red*'s exploration of autobiography, however, is not simply contained within its pages. On the level of the novel's reception, the drama of self-representation is thoroughly constructed by critics willing to carry on with or without Carson. Mark Halliday, in "Carson: Mind and Heart" argues that the classical elements of Autobiography are decoys:

> When Carson wraps her scenes in classical (or otherwise bibliographical) accoutrements, I think she's not so much teasing us as desperately trying to keep us from staring too directly at her. That is, I think the references to Stesichoros are among Carson's ambivalent gestures toward concealing the intimately confessional energy of her tale. (125)

Not only are the classical "accoutrements" disguises to Halliday, Geryon's homosexuality is likewise a distraction:

> The homosexuality of the main characters seems another such gesture. Nothing in the plot depends on the lovers being homosexual rather than

> heterosexual. Like the red wings, homosexuality seems to be serving Carson as a metaphor for the queerness of any deep spirit in the material world. Though we are told that Geryon writes his autobiography, it's hard not to feel that Carson has herself in mind with the first word of her book's title. (125)

Sharon Wahl similarly argues, in her essay 'Erotic Sufferings: *Autobiography of Red* and Other Anthropologies," that Geryon's autobiography is Carson's:

> [Carson] gives [Geryon] his heartbreak. Reading Geryon's heartbreak as an extension of Carson's gave it far greater impact, for me; perhaps because that weight of loss seemed to belong to someone older, not to a boy of fourteen. (185)

And she similarly attempts to secure Geryon's colour and his wings as purely metaphorical. She argues "the reader begins to wonder, are the wings really there? Maybe this is all metaphor . . . Are 'red' and 'wings' merely words here?" (182).
Even at the level of the novel's reception, then, the dangers of autobiography are apparent. A reader (one like Halliday or Wahl) who reads metaphor strictly as metaphor (or words as just words), jams the poetic narrative into another sort of epic code.

Perhaps the novel's critical reception would not have been so auto-biographicizing had Carson not already been a published poet; the poetic persona is so often misconstrued as the author. *Autobiography of Red* challenges those distinctions, the audience's desire for the author, so that even though the novel is not directly about Carson, in many ways makes it provides a much more useful study of autobiography.

This third chapter will pick up on the previous two chapters' discussions of transference and counter-transference – *Substance*'s lover contemplating the absent beloved, *Blown Figure*'s split subject sitting in judgment of herself – where otherness was interrogated, the subject looking for herself in the other. In *Autobiography of Red*, the search is for the Other's desire, everything a conspiring to be the object of that desire. Through *Autobiography of Red*, this chapter will read dialectically Jacques Hassoun's case study on Janus and Darian Leader's "The Depressive Position for Klein and Lacan," from his *Freud's Footnotes*. Crucial to this reading is the literary trope of the frame, which operates theoretically and narratively in these three texts. The manner in which each of these texts rhetorically "frames" reading, incites the reader's desire or anxiety, leads us to a crucial discussion of the perversity of certain texts that anticipate the reader, and to melancholia as a reading strategy. This question of frames will lead us to look more largely at what is a central preoccupation in Carson's works: the psychological and poetic concern with the distinction between "inside" and "outside" – a most ambivalent and melancholic preoccupation.

i. FETISH FRAMES, OR, THE SEDUCTIVE QUALITY OF OUTSIDE THINGS

Within the complex structure of Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, the poetic turn operates as both a fetish and a disavowal of the protagonist's, Geryon's, loss of his sense of home, and desire to be the object of Herakles's desire. It is on that level a theatre of perversion and yet meta-textually there is another play that any reading must participate in, a drama between the reader, the classicist's idea of a reader, the unnamed classicist herself who collects together these fragments, and Geryon's tale. This theatre of perversion is a confusing one, a play in which the reader or analyst is troubled to find a secure place to stand, the fourth wall constantly falling.

Autobiography of Red is an odd collection of pieces, opening not with the "Autobiography" itself, but with a "proemium," some fragments, and three appendices. Even when the autobiography ends, the text does not, the other side of the tale begins framed by an interview with Stesichoros, the supposed author of the "Autobiography."[38] From the start and in the end, then, this is a text that cannot escape frames. Indeed, critics are vocal and divided about the frame of the text, as Ian Rae points out:

> Oliver Reynolds praises Carson's attempt to blend intellect with emotion, but laments that the romance at the heart of her novel-in-verse could not "sustain the expectations created by its extraordinary first half" (24). In the same issue of the *TLS*, critic Karl Miller chooses *Autobiography of Red* as

> his book of the year on the strength of its "single magnificent and perplexing poem [the romance]" while suggesting that it "might have shed the gnomic appendices which both precede and round off the romance proper." (19)

Critics are divided over the relationship between the novel's frame and the poem within, yet, as Rae rightly argues, "a closer look at the manipulation of myth in *Autobiography of Red* reveals that the mock-academic apparatus surrounding the romance is neither absurd nor a simple extension of the lyric sequence" (19). These polarized reactions to the frame and the text proper seem to be the point, for as Melanie Rehak argues in the first line of her article, "Anne Carson is a poet who likes to get under people's skin" (36).

The unnamed classicist who is apparently and fictionally responsible for the edition of the *Geryoneis* – the various documents that frame and make up the narrative – begins the edition with what she refers to as a "proemium" (6), wherein she poses the question, "What difference did Stesichoros make?" It is, most certainly, a canonical question, one asked and pondered in the opening section to argue for the academic, historical, and poetic relevance for publishing what she tells us is the fourteenth edition of the *Geryoneis*. More importantly, though, this central question and the answers it permits her to supply rhetorically frame the texts that follow, providing an interpretive, poetic guide to Stesichoros's language and narrative choices.

Her first move is to locate Stesichoros biographically. She argues that it seems significant that Stesichoros grew up in a city called Himera where he lived with a refugee population, arguing further, "A refugee population is hungry for language and aware that anything can happen. Words bounce. Words, if you let them, will do what they want to do and what they have to do" (3). Words here, and language by correlation, is personified, given desire even, as she searches for the origins of his poetics and begins to establish a presence within language. Words do not stand in for the subject, but she is constructing them as their own discrete entity with their own presence.

The classicist takes this further with her discussion of Stesichoros's use of adjectives, where she provides the foundation of her answer to the principal question of what difference did he make. She asks,

> What is an adjective? Nouns name the world. Verbs activate the names. Adjectives come from somewhere else. The word *adjective* (*epitheton* in Greek) is itself an adjective meaning "placed on top," "added," "appended," "imported," "foreign." Adjectives seem fairly innocent additions but look again. These small imported mechanisms are in charge of attaching everything in the world to its place in particularity. They are the latches of being. (4)

The classicist here explores the ambiguous force of an adjective that in various guises adds to, yet remains foreign to, the noun or subject. The adjective is a supplement, and yet the paradox here is that such innocent additions are responsible for both "particularity" and "being" – meaning is not contained within the noun, or the verb, according to the classicist.

She goes on to contrast Stesichoros's use of adjectives with Homer's, and as a result measures Stesichoros as a counter-code poet, without Homer's "traditional" passion:

> Homer fastens every substance in the world to its aptest attribute and holds them in place for epic consumption. There is a passion in it but what kind of passion? "Consumption is not a passion for substances but a passion for the code," says Baudrillard. (4)

The classicist correlates "epic" and "the code" and marks them for "consumption," suggesting that there is a consumer culture for certain narratives. According to her, Homer "fastens" and "holds in place," fixing words to limiting meanings, in contrast to how she has previously described the way "words bounce. Words, if you let them, will do what they want to do and what they have to do" (3). Words, left to Homer's passion for code, don't bounce, are thumb-screwed to their "aptest attribute" without desire, without the ability to do what they have to do – they have no presence, no desire of their own.[39]

Stesichoros, on the other hand, has a different passion, according to the classicist. This passion is not to submit to a code, as Homer did, to fix words to it, but instead it is a passion for the adjective, a passion for language's own desire:

> [The code] leaned away from him. He went closer. It stopped. "Passion for substances" seems a good description of that moment. For no reason that anyone can name, Stesichoros began to undo the latches.
>
> Stesichoros released being. All the substances in the world went floating up. Suddenly there was nothing to interfere with horses being *hollow hooved*. Or a river being *root silver*. Or a child *bruiseless*. Or hell

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[39] In Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*, the epic code and myth represent a false truth as well: "And from the true lies of poetry / trickled out a question. / What really connects words and things? / Not much, decided my husband" (33). More than obscuring the true nature of things, the world's particularity, in *Beauty* it is a malicious lie.

> *as deep as the sun is high*. Or Herakles *ordeal strong*. Or a planet *middle night stuck*. Or an insomniac *outside the joy*. Or killings *cream black*. (5)

The classicist's examples demonstrate how Stesichoros strays from tradition, from what she calls a "passion for the code" (4). This gap between "the code" and "substances" then points to the power of the adjective, to the particular, its power to create a life where there wasn't one.

Interestingly, the manner in which the classicist distinguishes the power of the adjective assumes the life was already there. Adjectives don't lie, don't create, they "undo the latches" and describe life which is already there, and as she had already pointed out, "Words, if you let them, will do what they want to do and what they have to do" (3) – language is a peculiar subject here, with a subjectivity, desire, and intent. Yet what it desires is not to create but to insist on recognizing other presences, other states of "being" that exist, marginalized by the Epic.

The classicist goes on to point to Stesichoros's complimentary sense of narrative and perspective. Just as his use of adjectives and his approach to language undo the "latches of being," his approach to the actual perspective and narrative of the tale of Geryon turns against tradition, and counters epic convention and its particular passion for the code:

> If Stesichoros had been a more conventional poet he might have taken the point of view of Herakles and framed a thrilling account of the victory of culture over monstrosity. But instead the extant fragments of Stesichoros' poem offer a tantalizing cross section of scenes, both proud and pitiful, from Geryon's own experience. We see his red boy's life and his little

> dog. A scene of wild appeal from his mother, which breaks off. Interspersed shots of Herakles approaching over the sea. A flash of the gods in heaven pointing to Geryon's doom. The battle itself. The moment when everything goes suddenly slow and Herakles' arrow divides Geryon's skull. We see Herakles kill the little dog with his famous club. (6).

The classicist is true to her word on the first part, that Stesichoros turns against convention, against the conventions of the epic and the valorization of Herakles, and this further points to the monstrous nature of what lies outside the Epic convention. That which undoes the latches, then, risks releasing what is monstrous, and at the very least of challenging the privileged place of that which is authorized by the Epic code. This is a radical shift in perspective, then, where Herakles and the epic code become the monstrous force.

Yet, this is where the unnamed classicist first appears unreliable. The "Autobiography of Red" hardly resembles the "tantalizing cross section" she outlines. Instead, as Melanie Rehak points out in her *New York Times Magazine* article,

> The poem fleshes out what is known about Geryon . . . and then places his story in an aggressively modern context. It's the tale of how a young boy, who – in addition to being red and having wings – is gay, grows up and is ravaged by love and, later, by unrequited love. (38)

Gone are Herakles' sea approach, the dog, the gods in heaven, the battle, and the arrow and in their place are "an aggressively modern context" and a love that ravages him instead of splitting his head open.

I have bracketed the classicist's reliability so far because, though her rhetoric and her credibility are convincing in the preamble and the appendices – she wields academic discourse well and authoritatively – once the reader reaches the actual "Autobiography of Red," she becomes suspect. Indeed, everything she has said about the language play and radical perspective are verifiable, but the piece is in itself an utter anachronism, the setting entirely modern. The question that can never be answered is, is this a product of translation, a poetic colorization,[40] an attempt to reinscribe the piece within a modern context, or is the entire piece a lie?

Without the classicist's frame, the "Autobiography of Red" stands alone, is not questionable in any sense. Only the classicist's claims make the tale told suspect. What, then, is the purpose of the framing documents? And, conversely, what is the rhetorical purpose of anachronism? Are the classicist's anachronistic translations perhaps symbolized in the appendices and the tale they tell of Stesichoros's blinding by Helen? Or are they the monstrous product of the Epic and its repressive code – Geryon as return of the repressed.

By questioning the frame of the classicist's claims in the proemium based on the poem proper, the reader turns back and question her other claims. If the reader is to believe the classical scholar who collects together these fragments, then the *Geryoneis* ("The Geryon Matter") is made up of "Some eighty-four papyrus fragments and a half-dozen citations" (5), yet what is required to verify this is some strange math wherein, in order to tally a total of ninety fragments one must include every section included here: the forty-seven that make up the novel proper, the sixteen that structure the section entitled "Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros," the testimonia in appendix A, the three points of the palinode in appendix B, the twenty-one points raised in Appendix C, the interview with Stesichoros that comes after the novel proper, and lastly, and most strangely, all these fragments would tally up to eighty-nine, leaving us one short.

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[40] See the re-colorization of Jacques Demy's film *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. The director's wife, after his death, recolorized the movie. The result is almost unbearable to watch, as though someone had unleashed all the repressed colors in the world and given them their own film.

This missing piece is only one example of "[n]umerous elements of the Isis myth [that] resonate with the Geryoneis – the characters, the fetishization of red, the goddess' journey and triumph over death" (25). Rae argues, however, that "one story does not transpose onto the other" (25) and goes on to tell the story of Isis and Osiris:

> Turning Egypt into a "Red Place," Seth trapped Osiris in a coffin and sent him floating down the Nile. Isis retrieved the fragments of Osiris, but "did not find . . . his male member . . . In its place Isis fashioned a likeness of it and consecrated the phallus, in honour of which the Egyptians even today hold festival" (Plutarch 145). Revived, Osiris ascended to the sky and left his wife to rule in his absence, her power confirmed by the symbolic phallus entrusted to her priestesses . . . The fragments of the *Geryoneis* . . . are pieces of the Stesichorean / Osirian body that Carson must summon all her poetic and academic craft to revive. However, Carson does not, like Isis, use the power of inscription entrusted to her to uphold patriarchal codes. (26-27)

Though I think Rae is correct in this last assertion, there is the missing piece in the classicist's tally, so that like Isis fashioning a makeshift phallus to reassemble her beloved's body, here the missing piece can only be the classicist's own introduction. She has made herself part of the Geryon matter, so that her words are inseparable from how the *Geryoneis* is read.

This inclusion of her own words textually works the way she describes Stesichoros' use of adjectives in the sense that, like an adjective, her introduction seeks to embrace particularity, to flip the latches of being. It might not matter that the inclusion of her own introduction, the grafting of the frame of reading, is equally her own attempt to create a subjectivity in which she is invested – a vicarious or parasitic identity, certainly, but part of the academic game she is playing. Yet, although her frame betrays her, shows how she has made the text contemporary, it also provides a necessary interpretive addition and justifies the unusual poetics and narrative. It is difficult to imagine Stesichoros, or the *Geryoneis* without them – in the end, perhaps this is more accurately a mutually parasitic relationship.

The classicist is in the *Geryoneis* in other ways as well, in her preoccupation with the question of Stesichoros' blinding by Helen. Her proemium, all three of the appendices, and a portion of the interview (which ends the *Geryoneis* in this edition) all touch on the question of "the famous story that he was struck blind by Helen" (3). The classicist's fascination with this "famous story" seems to be connected to the *Geryoneis* through what she has said about Stesichoros' use of language, his fascination with adjectives and his passion for substances:

> To Helen of Troy, for example, was attached an adjectival tradition of whoredom already old by the time Homer used it. When Stesichoros unlatched her epithet from Helen, there flowed out such a light as may have blinded him for a moment. This is a big question, the question of the

> blinding of Stesichoros by Helen (see Appendixes A, B,), although generally regarded as unanswerable (but see Appendix C). (5)

There is a relationship between the extent of the epic tradition as a repressive code and that which is potentially released when it is "unlatched."

The classicist poses the story of the blinding as a "big question," and ambivalently, it seems, as one that is possibly unanswerable since, as the appendices illustrate, the story of the blinding erases itself, leaving little proof. Furthermore, as Rae points out,

> In fact, the twenty-one syllogisms . . . "induce a narcosis of logic" (Rasula 188) by manipulating the binary movement of statement and counter-statement. Pressuring the gaps created by language, Carson begins with the simple syllogism, "1. Either Stesichoros was a blind man or he was not"(18), and proceeds to more vertiginous and Steinian statements . . . Circling and supplementing, Carson draws out the phantom of doubt in deduction's linear movements towards truth. (29)

The "big question" of the blinding becomes a phantom doubt. Though it does raise the question of residue and whether recantation can erase something once it has been said – the presence in language she refers to, seems to endure.

If the inclusion of her own introduction is suspect, then it follows that each inclusion here might be suspect, and raises the academic and rhetorical usefulness of the appendices and the interview. In any case, the unnamed classicist sees a textual and archival significance in Stesichoros' blinding, and sees it as significant enough to include in this, the apparent fourteenth edition of the *Geryoneis*. The story and the "big question" it raises are testament to the power of his language to offend, to release and to repair. Though Stesichoros, in the interview that brackets the other end of the "Autobiography," when asked about Helen claims, "There is no Helen." This is possibly a denial for fear of reprisal, but there is a strong possibility that this corresponds to the theme established by the classicist in the proemium about the repressiveness of the epic code. In that last denial there is the power of that repression, that denial not only that she was a whore or that he was blinded, but that she ever existed at all. Repression always protects something, and in this last instance it is potentially protecting Stesichoros from further blinding, though the reader must wonder if Helen will not be equally angered by being denied.

Just as the blinding is an unanswerably "big question," so, ultimately, is the classicist's fascination with it. Indeed, as our reading will continue to discover, the classicist is more of a mystery than Stesichoros or Geryon. She remains continuously suspect, as do her unexplained fascinations and inclusions, and most explicitly, her identity. She has no name and no stated academic affiliation, so the inclusions become fetish objects, the only way of justifying her as editor of the edition and the only evidence of who she might be.

Only in her final paragraphs of the proemium does the classicist point to the incompleteness of the *Geryoneis*. She refers to the "Autobiography" as his "masterpiece," but then reveals that only "Some of its principle fragments are below . . . No passage longer than thirty lines is quoted from him and papyrus scraps (still being found: the most recent fragments were recovered from cartonnage in Egypt in 1977) withhold as much as they tell" (6). Ostensibly, this seems her function. In terms of the papyrus scraps themselves, however, this perception – of withholding as much as they tell – points to a material form in the manuscripts that even before the actual interpretation creates a certain reading, one requiring the skills of a detective or a master-skilled interpreter. She does not tell us how many "principal" fragments are missing, what makes papyrus such a secretive material, or why "no passage longer than thirty lines is quoted from him" (6). The reader has to trust her. Has to trust that she knows what the best representation of the *Geryoneis* is.

Yet as an editor and a translator, she delegates authority to the reader, while she maintains an authoritative position. When she discusses the edition and its ordering, she first through analogy blames Stesichoros:

> No edition is exactly the same as any other in its contents or its ordering of the contents. Bergk says the history of a text is like a long caress. However that may be, the fragments of the *Geryoneis* itself read as if Stesichoros had composed a substantial narrative poem then ripped it to pieces and buried the pieces in a box with some song lyrics and lecture notes and scraps of meat. The fragment numbers tell you roughly how the pieces fell out of the box. You can of course keep shaking the box. "Believe me for meat and for myself," as Gertrude Stein says. Here. Shake. (6-7)

Her first turn then is to blame the author for the text that lacks order, but her second turn is to offer the reader a chance to participate, by giving the box another shake, though it might just as easily be read as a challenge. Even the apparent order of this edition she attributes to "how the pieces fell out of the box" (7) – she has had no hand in this. Anywhere. She continues to construct herself as a passive editor, without influence, and, in the end, the reader has to believe her for the meat and for herself. In this way, she does differentiate herself from the figure of Isis I already compared her to: she does not use her position – her introduction as the missing piece – to "uphold patriarchal codes" (Rae 27).

Her final quotation, from Stein, takes us back to the title and the question of meat in these opening documents. "Red Meat" in the title refers firstly to Geryon and his peculiar and monstrous colour. The colon after it, leads to the question "What Difference Did Stesichoros Make?" which should make us read back to the "Red Meat" once more and find association on both sides of the colon. The meat of the question, then, is red, and in some way refers to the "difference" Stesichoros is able to make. The classicist, then, in her choice of titles, is making a correlation between Stesichoros' "passion for substances" and red meat.

Yet what remains ambiguous is the choice of the word "meat," where it seems possible that "flesh," "body" or any other substantive word for the concrete reality of a subject could stand.[41] Perhaps Homer's passion makes things for "epic consumption" and Stesichoros' passion makes red meat, that which cannot be consumed with an epic appetite, that which is irreducible and somehow beyond language as it stands separate in the analogy she employs at the end of the proemium: "as if Stesichoros had composed a substantial narrative poem then ripped it to pieces and buried the pieces in a box with some song lyrics and lecture notes and scraps of meat" (6-7). The answer to why "meat " is in the title would also answer why she imagines meat would have to be added to the recipe of the *Geryoneis* in order to represent how it reads. Meat no longer implies a subjectivity the way "flesh" might, but it is still substantial, still implies some concrete presence. That "meat" is meant to be consumed, that it is incorporable, undermines this presence to some extent, so as a metaphoric ingredient to Stesichoros's poetics it has an almost contradictory presence. There is also a connection to the difficult materiality of papyrus fragments and how they "withhold as much as they tell" (6), this meat that provides presence as it sits, prepared to be eaten.

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[41] Rae makes some provocative connections between the quote from Gertrude Stein that ends the proemium, and a section in Carson's essay "The Gender of Sound" where she quotes the biographer M.D. Luhan as saying "Gertrude was hearty. She used to roar with laughter, out loud. She had a laugh like a beefsteak. She loved beef" (121). For Rae, Carson's book gives "Stein's voice increasing prominence in the story of a monster who tends a herd of mythical red cattle and whose name means 'roarer' or 'speaker.' Stein's epigrammatic voice in the upper margin of the first page resurfaces as reported speech in the body of the proem, as a stylistic echo in 'Appendix C,' and eventually as an active voice in the final interview"(23).

At any rate, this contradictory metaphor of "meat" and its connection to the colour red in the title "Red Meat" leads us back to Geryon's own monstrous body. As Adam Phillips argues in "Fickle Contracts: The Poetry of Anne Carson,"

> Writing in the margins, whether that entails squeezing oneself in, or randomly expanding a text, shows a certain regard for boundaries and for bodies – if only of words – the twin preoccupations of all Carson's writing and about which she is unfailingly interesting. She makes the formal considerations of writing – where you do it, in essays, or poems, or on the margins of other peoples's words – seem as urgent as bodily needs. (112)

Carson's style reflects Geryon's emphatic, contradictory search to find some way to signify in the narrative of his own life, and not be consumed by epic endings.

ii. DISAVOWAL AND DEIFICATION

> It's the unknown one carries within oneself: writing is what is attained. It's that or nothing.
>
> One can speak of a writing sickness. (32)
>
> *Writing*
>
> Marguerite Duras

Jacques Hassoun's *Cruelty of Depression* is, like the "Autobiography of Red" within *Autobiography of Red*, a text within a text. It is framed twice, but first and foremost by a note to the text and secondly by Michael Vincent Miller's Foreword. These two documents, much the same as the appendices and classicist's proemium in *Autobiography of Red*, frame the reading that is to follow, truly displaying their own anxiety and desire, and ultimately guiding a certain reading of the text to follow: the reader is caught, from the start and irrevocably, in a drama of interpretation.

The note to the text that precedes all else in *Cruelty of Depression* points out that "Throughout this book, both in the foreword and the text, the pronouns 'he' and 'him' are used to refer to the melancholic subject. This usage intends no prejudice, but is simply a matter of stylistic expediency" (vi). This is an odd turn in many senses, since, as Julia Kristeva points out in *Black Sun*, there is a "greater frequency of feminine depressions – a sociologically proven fact" (71). Moreover, and what will concern us foremost in this chapter, is the connection that the note to the text makes when it refers to the pronoun choice as "simply a matter of stylistic expediency"(vi). After Jacques Lacan modified Buffon's aphorism, "Le Style, c'est l'homme," so that it semantically shifted to mean, "Style is the man you address yourself to," as the epigraph to the French edition of *Écrits*, he made it so that nothing could ever be simply stylistic again.

In the case study of Janus, the first case study Hassoun makes reference to in *Cruelty of Depression*, the style the analysand aspires to and fears is an ambiguous third term in the relationship with the analyst. It is a drama that the analyst must anticipate, for it anticipates him. So whether it is Hassoun or the editor who argues for "stylistic expediency" – so soon before Hassoun discusses the importance of making the melancholic analysand wait in the transference, so they understand time – the question of why and what effect this expediency has must become an open question: why does Hassoun want the analysand to wait, but the reader should not? At the very least, this subliminally differentiates the reader from the melancholic analysand.

Michael Vincent Miller's foreword proceeds after this note to the text, and he, an American Gestalt psychoanalyst, frames Hassoun's text, preparing an American audience for the French psychoanalyst's first work translated into English. Miller introduces Hassoun and the subject of depression by looking at Hassoun's work through the framework of social history, history of psychoanalysis, history of French language and letters, and a reading of exile (or put in another way, the drama of origins). At each step his agenda seems to be arguing for and anticipating America's cultural need for Hassoun as an analyst. It is clear Miller wants Hassoun present on American soil, and perhaps it is he who wants him there with expediency.

For Miller, the way into understanding Hassoun's text is first of all through the historical context, through perhaps seeing our current cultural historical state as an "Age of Depression," as discussed in the introduction. He paints a comparison between modernism and the present, evoking a sort of cultural personality:

> Whereas anxiety accompanied the development of modernism, signifying our restless anticipation of impending social catastrophe, depression seems to be the end of the Cold War. Even as the threat of nuclear holocaust subsides, it's as though we have already been through too much. (vii)

First and foremost this suggests that Hassoun has something to say not just about a psychological state, but a cultural condition. Secondly, Miller regards this change as a "spiritual change," from anxiety to depression. He does betray his own desire here, however unconscious or conscious a move it is. In the dialectic between anxiety and depression, he admits that

> Thinking about emotions like anxiety and depression in relation to time and history to social life as well as individual life, however, seems much more connected to an older psychological tradition than it does to our own present attitude. (viii)

There is a nostalgic bent to his analytic desire here, one connected to an older psychological tradition, perhaps more Freudian than Lacanian or Hassounian, and this nostalgia is also symptomatic of a desire for origins, as though they represent a more integral or authentic body – "tradition" versus "attitude."

Concurrent with this nostalgia, Miller goes on to criticize the current prescription-oriented therapies, implicitly seeing the technique as a *mise-en-abyme* for a cultural ethos. He criticizes "the new science of depression" (viii) and points out, ironically, that "[t]he restoration of well-being now seems to require little more than swallowing so many micrograms a day" (viii). This current state of psychology, and under it the comparable cultural impasse, has limited its understanding of depression, he argues. As a culture, we have been unable to see the complex importance of that emotional state. Miller's American culture needs the analyst they can find in Hassoun, a melancholic turning back in order to go forward.

Reading further back, Miller moves on to situate Hassoun's text in relation to schools of psychology and the history of psychoanalysis. As a Gestalt therapist, Miller might not share a lot with Lacan's tenets, but he is as equally suspicious of the modern and particularly American trend to medicate depression and regard it as "a defect in how the brain functions" (viii). Miller sees this as a bi-product of American Ego Psychology, a group that Lacan was vocally critical of. He argues that "[w]e end up with a narrow view of depression, which leaves out its mystery and metaphysical horror – the terrible waste but also the sometimes astounding creativity that can emerge from this dark cave in the human condition" (viii). For Miller, Hassoun's theories on melancholia provide a more ambivalent perspective and imagine it as not just a wasteful state of mind, but possibly also a wellspring of creativity. The fear of one aspect should not foreclose on the possibility of another.

Having framed Hassoun in terms of his place in cultural and psychoanalytic history, Miller turns to framing Hassoun's language, his poetics, if you will. He first compares Hassoun to Freud, but praises Hassoun's more "metaphorical reach" (xiii) and argues that "[p]sychoanalytic theory, in Hassoun's hands, resembles the metaphorical knowledge of poetry much more than it does scientific generalization from empirical data"(xix). Hassoun, according to Miller, not only has something to say, but he has the language, the style, to say it.

Further to that, Miller perceives somewhere in Hassoun's text a marriage between psychoanalytic discourse and something Miller perceives as intrinsic to the French language, a marriage that creates a hybrid poetic language that Miller regards as emulating a certain structure:

> [T]he French language – in both sound and sense, with its silky elisions, its gift for nuance, its mellifluous flow of impressionistic images – seems somehow closer than other languages to the material one associates with the unconscious. This is why French literature slides so smoothly into the world of dreams, into a logic of associations, into alternate realities, even into vacancy, absence, nothingness. (xvii)

This romantic construction of the French language leads us back to what Miller argues is the current state of affairs in America. He has argued earlier in the introduction that "we have passed from a romanticization of certain illnesses . . . to a romance of cure" (x). The open question I will pose at this point is, is Miller's romance in his introduction with the cure, the illness, or –perhaps what's really getting romanced here – the language, the style, of the analyst, Hassoun?

Miller carries the romance further, to his own poetic ends by comparing Hassoun's style to Lacan's. He sees Lacan's language as "the bridge between the abstract structures of pure reason and the surreal logic of dreams"(xvii). Miller's writing then takes a turn for the poetic as he describes Hassoun's style:

> There is a great intensity in Lacan's writing, which conveys a sense of limitless penetration into the darkness, but it is cool, abstract, even icy at times. Hassoun is equally at home in the depths of the psyche, yet the temperature keeps rising in his books toward pleasure and sensuality when he captures life's more gratifying possibilities; toward the expression of an urgent, bemused sympathy when he contemplates his often deeply disturbed patients. (xix)

Hassoun's style, then, is not just "impressionistic" French, not just like Lacan's bridge between "logic" and "dreams", but also something to do with "pleasure and sensuality." These might as well be conflicting senses for all their ambivalence. Hassoun's language, then, is closer to his subject matter, perhaps reflecting a spirit similar to Kristeva's opening evocation in *Black Sun* or her argument in *Powers of Horror* that "it is necessary that the analyst's interpretive speech (and not only his literary or theoretical bilingualism) be affected by [the analysand's discourse] in order to be analytical" (*Powers* 30). Hassoun's poetics, his style, perhaps necessarily must speak with a melancholic accent, and this is one of Miller's attractions to Hassoun, for he is closer and seems more congruent with melancholia, unlike the medicalizing discourses Miller sees proliferating around "depression."

This flirtation with evocation, or mimesis of the analysand's speech, is most obvious in Hassoun's use of metaphor. Where the unnamed classicist of *Autobiography of Red* praises Stesichoros's use of adjective, Miller praises Hassoun's use of metaphor:

> His typical stylistic gesture is to stretch a metaphor, whether a Lacanian one or one of his own, to its breaking point, which gives a certain wild

> idiosyncrasy to his writings on psychoanalysis . . . When he writes about passion, he seems almost in the throes of it himself. Often his study of the melancholic temperament teeters precariously on the verge of excess. But it thus conveys the discrepancy one frequently senses between the relatively calm, sad and withdrawn, social façade of the depressed person and the colliding, explosive forces about to boil over inside. (xix)

As Miller points out here, there is a sense of drama and performance to Hassoun's style as it resembles and reflects the inner reality of the subject it is discussing. This discrepancy is the contradiction which shapes the melancholic: excessive and yet "an absence erected into a being, one which rules the subject's entire existence" (12).[42]

Though Miller praises this excess, this attempt to fatigue a metaphor, it may be questionable as an analytic style. If the analyst's style is as excessive and exhaustive as the analysand's, how will there be any movement in the address or style of the analysand's language? Miller argues, however, that although "Hassoun's book does not provide another means of self-help for the do-it-yourself recovery movement" (xxviii), it is nonetheless caught in the "dialectical war between knowledge as technique and knowledge as insight" (xxviii). Miller laments that much of "current psychology . . . is readily digested and turned into techniques to counter the stresses of technology" (xxviii) but sees Hassoun's writing as exempt from that fate, for it is "too unusual, too meditative, too labyrinthine, perhaps even too personal a book" (xxix).

That Hassoun is not "readily digested" draws us back to Carson's unnamed narrator's "Red Meat" and her assertion that Stesichoros's style is not composed for "epic consumption" (4). Such a comparison here can help us to see that psychoanalysis is in certain locations its own epic code, and that the poetic style that Hassoun adopts here and that others like Kristeva have adopted are resistances to that code, resistances to being too easily consumed. There is the possibility, then, that in the "dialectical war between knowledge as technique and knowledge as insight" (xxviii), Hassoun's poetic style will open a conversation between the two, at the same time as it will undo melancholia's latches of being, help us understand the full complexity of melancholia before bending it to the will of technique.

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[42] Yet, this does raise a question: is Hassoun's style better chosen to seduce a reading audience and perform melancholia than it is to engage the melancholic analysand?

Yet, this defense of Hassoun's poetics and the evocation of the insight / technique dialectic could also be just Miller providing an alibi for Hassoun. As already discussed in relation to the case study of Janus, Hassoun has plenty to say about technique, so is it that Miller thinks Hassoun's techniques do not readily translate to a North American context, or that Hassoun's techniques are not as useful as his insights? In any event, the insight / technique dialectic, as Miller evokes it seems to be a reaction to a self-help society, looking for a week-to-week plan for recovery, and Miller's awareness and assertion that what provides radical insight is that which cannot be too readily consumed.

After framing Hassoun culturally, historically, and discursively, Miller begins to search for origins, in his own counter-transferential turn to understand the analyst / theorist's connection to his work. Miller finds "perhaps a touch of [Hassoun's] melancholy" (xxi) in Hassoun's attraction to images of exile. Within this connection between Hassoun's own exile and the psychological exile of his melancholic patients, Miller is arguing for Hassoun as a subject not only presumed to know, but presumed to have experienced – a double authority.

Ultimately, Miller's introduction disavows first what may be perceived by a North American audience as lacking in "technique," then situates Hassoun as an authority, both first hand and second hand, so as to assert Hassoun's position as a subject "presumed to know." The role of this introduction seems congruent with the note towards "stylistic expediency," an effort to make Hassoun more palatable to a North American audience, a task certainly at odds with Hassoun's own poetic resistance to being too easily consumed. Like the proemium in Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, the introduction to Hassoun's text promotes a new reading strategy, but unlike Carson's it does not resist "patriarchal codes."

iii. THE DESIRING FRAME OF FOOTNOTES

Thus far in this chapter our focus has been on the frames of reading and the role desire plays in this architecture. In *Freud's Footnotes*, the metaphor Darian Leader uses is not one of frames but of footnoting. There is something in the typographic metaphor of the footnote, though, that not only sources but opens up a structured question. More specific to Leader's chapter on Klein and Lacan, the footnote opens the possibility of a different reading strategy. In this sense, then, Leader's foot-notation is the frame through which the reader will read Freud, Lacan, and Klein on infantile depression and development.

Footnotes are, though, first and foremost a method of sourcing. On this level, Leader's affirmation of footnotes takes Lacan's "I am not the subject presume to know" and applies it historically to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theorists, pointing out questions and ideas that connect one research avenue to the next.

> This is not a study of Freud's footnotes themselves, in the literal sense. Rather, it is about footnotes that one might add to put Freud in perspective and to open up certain questions about psychoanalytic theory and practice. Contexts, influences, revisions and debates are therefore of special interest, although none of the chapters that follow claim to treat their subjects exhaustively. (7)

In a field of study like psychoanalysis, and in the later part of the twentieth century specifically, where theorists like Julia Kristeva make the political move of sourcing artist's ideas, but none of her contemporaries' (Jacques Lacan gets one reference in *Black Sun*)[43], this proposition seems even more imperative. Leader argues that "notes also matter by not being there, and that is a problem that runs implicitly through most of the chapters in this book" (6). More generally he's concerned with the contexts Freud and others don't provide to their theorizing:

> Psychoanalytic history, in the form that I am interested in, looks at the context of debates and the choice of questions. Rather than focusing exclusively on the 'internal development' of Freud's work or his more general place in culture, it is about situating research questions that preoccupied him and then seeing how his responses were formed and modified by debate with his colleagues. Each of Freud's works should make us ask the question: why did he write this? (3)

At its core, then, Leader's text will look at Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan, and others who followed Freud, imagining them as footnotes and imagining the footnotes they themselves left out.

Peculiarly enough, this is also how Carson describes her style of writing and translation in an interview with Mary di Michele:

> When I was working on ["Mimnermos"], I started from a translation of a body of fragments, then added to the translation an essay, in some degree historical, explaining the background of the poet and how the fragments have come down to us. And in dealing with that historical material, I found a whole lot of what they call, in Classics, "testimonia," which

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[43] This was a formal move by many feminist theorists to resist "tradition," and, some say, by Kristeva to avoid an overt connection to what many feminist-psychoanalysts considered Lacan's misogyny.

> means anecdotal stories about the poet or about the poem, that are passed down and aren't really regarded as credible history. But they shape our notion of who the poet was as a person. (12-13)

Carson's style, too, is foot-notational, reads into the gaps and tries to flesh out the context for the works she is analyzing. This stylistic approach is interested in what is repressed by the representation of a written work, all the various contexts and connections that are overlooked or not considered official history. Stesichoros would have loved footnotes.

Footnotes reach, however, far further than mere sourcing and extend even beyond Leader's reach or indeed my own. In recent years, there has been a particular interest in the footnote. Critics like Kevin Jackson, Anthony Grafton, and Chuck Zerby have all turned to a fascination with the footnote, though they, for the most part, cannot agree on its nature or effect.[44] Chuck Zerby, in his *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*, celebrates the footnote to the extent that his analysis at times becomes embarrassingly self-pleasuring:

> Amusement, charm, a chance to rest: These gifts alone should make us grateful for the footnote. But the footnote is also educational. If it opens windows to bands and parades, it also lets us peer into the inner workshops of scholars. A few glimpses of what goes on there should convince anyone that it is an entirely human activity, that the impersonal recitation of ideas or seamless narrative a text sometimes allows us to enjoy is an illusion – as much of an illusion as a Fred Astaire dance across tables and chairs, up walls, and across ceilings. Footnotes let us hear the

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[44] All their concerted attention has come up in the last five years. Perhaps this is evidence of a renewed cultural interest in marginalized or counter discourses, or equally possible, the symptom of a voraciously overwrought academia looking for original subject matter.

> missteps of biases, and hear pathos, subtle decisions, scandal and anger. (5)

The conflict the footnote can incite becomes a question of reading, a question of pleasure, anxiety or frustration.

Other theorists, like Grafton, are more ambivalent about the footnotes' contributions and distractions. Zerby, discussing Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History*, notes that Grafton is "a terribly conflicted supporter of the footnote" (12), adding rather oddly, "That is sad" (14), as though he is expressing pity or sympathy. He quotes the Noel Coward quip that Grafton refers to as evidence: "'Having to read a footnote,' the lyric dramatist claimed, 'resembles having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love'" (14). Zerby picks up the analogy, but uses it to disagree:

> The footnote is just as likely to bring to the door a welcome visitor, perhaps handsome or pretty, sometimes garrulous but often pleasantly sociable. Many a somnolent reader has (metaphorically) hugged such a visitor and hoped many more would come to the door: A text sometimes is something only a scholar can love; a footnote, however, is like a blind date, threatening and exciting, dreary occasionally but often entertaining. And a footnote does not require or expect a long-term commitment. (14)

Zerby's odd diatribe basically accuses Coward, Grafton and other scholars who subscribe to Coward's quip, of not being in the process of making love, but of sleeping, as though they do not know what sex, or pleasure is. Their focus on and preference for the text proper is given all the seductive portrayal of something homely and "committed" in the most claustrophobic sense. Obviously, the pleasure of the text is in the eye of the beholder.

For our purposes, though, let us note that the conflict created is not just between the text proper and the footnote. The strength of the reactions point to a transference created in the reading process. These polarized reactions are similar to the critical disagreements over the purpose of Carson's critical frame to the romantic tale in *Autobiography of Red*. Just as Carson's unnamed classicist refuses to "use the power of inscription entrusted to her to uphold patriarchal codes" ("Dazzling" 27), so too the footnote refuses to let the text proper uphold such codes. At the very least, footnotes excite the nerves of the reader, for better or worse.

In the case of Freud's case studies, the footnote takes on a truly monstrous proportion. In his case studies on Leonardo and Dora (as discussed in chapter two), the footnotes threaten to capsize the case work, often providing the most provocative details of the analysand and the analysis. These carnivalesque footnotes act as testament to the uncontainable nature of the analysand, the assertion of a presence that cannot be easily delineated or interpreted in analytical discourse. The footnote acts as concurrently metonymic of the analysand's excited and exciting search for presence and of the analyst's counter-transference, the affect brought up in the analysis. The tension or dynamic between the text proper and its footnotes can be symptomatic of other things, including the transference or counter-transference.

Yet this business of sourcing, of pulling back the wizard's curtain, seems to circle a more abstract, psychic relationship between the text proper and its footnotes. As Leader points out,

> While a text remains temperate, its footnotes may condense all the hateful intrigues of its author, and it is often the case that the spatial partition of a page between text and footnote becomes the stage for such a splitting of the adulatory and the vindictive. (5)

Leader suggests that a text might remain "temperate," while "its footnotes may *condense* all the hateful intrigues" (5; emphasis mine). Whether or not this is a reference to the process of condensation that negotiates the split between the conscious and unconscious mind, as Freud first theorized in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it sets up a spatial metaphor with a dynamic component between the strata. Freud argues, "that condensation is brought about by omission" (386) and asks the crucial question, "If only a few elements from the dream-thoughts find their way into the dream-content, what are the conditions which determine their selection?" (386). In other words, what is omitted and what is selected in the process of condensation? This is the principal question that I am raising, too, in terms of the footnote: what it excludes, includes, and its fraught relationship to the text proper. The footnote then is a site of citation, of sourcing, and of what is perhaps unthinkable in the style of a "temperate" and well-mannered discourse. It provides a counter-discursive space that is both "versatile" (5) and "suggestive" (7).

If one understands the relationship between the text proper and discursive footnotes as working with a dynamic similar to conscious and unconscious mind, to the process of condensation, then it is not dynamically dissimilar to also read the more conflicted relationships between text and footnote as symptomatic. Just as condensation negotiates between dream thoughts and dream content, the symptom "is predicated on a basic distinction between surface and depth, between phenomena (objects which cannot be directly experienced) and the hidden causes of those phenomena which cannot be experienced but must be inferred" (Fink 203). A footnote, like a symptom, Slovoj Zizek argues, potentially "arises where the word fails, where the circuit of the Symbolic communication is broken; it is a kind of prolongation of the communication by other means; the failed, repressed word articulates itself in a coded, ciphered form" (*Feminism and Psychoanalysis* 424). Just as Stesichoros's adjectives are "latches of being," the footnote ruptures the circuit of the Symbolic.

As a marginalized discourse, the footnote can be read as failed (it does not warrant its own proper, discrete text), repressed, (typographically relegated to the bottom of the page, that which is banished from the text proper), and coded (sometimes full of hidden intrigues, the story behind the story, and often pointing to other areas of research and undeveloped ideas – it is always signifying something more than itself, even if it only signifies a counter-transferential relationship with the text proper). The psychology of footnotes is a mired business, a foray into the land of what cannot properly, politely, or authoritatively sit at the dinner table – the footsies of footnotes, what goes on below the table.

An essential characteristic of the footnote often is its intimacy. Sometimes a less formal address, it always raises the question of to whom it is addressed. As Zizek argues, "there is no symptom without its addressee . . . So, in its very constitution, the symptom implies the field of the big Other as consistent, complete, because its very formation is an appeal to the Other which contains its meaning" (424). This appeal to the Other, this address, is a perverse move and draws attention to the relationship between writer and reader, between subject and other. I will have more to say about this appeal to the Other, but suffice it to say for now that the footnote binds the writer and the reader together more intimately, makes the reading more writerly and the writing more self-consciously readerly.

To say that the symptom always has an address, though, does not mean that it does not have a constitutive function for the subject. Indeed the "active" relationship between reader and writer described above is based on misrecognition and the reader is always implied. This implied reader as Other is part of the subject's own construction of being, creating a self-conscious dialogue between text and footnote:

> Symptom thus has a radical ontological status: conceived as sinthome, it is literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject. (425)

Feeding back to what was already discussed about Carson's classicist and her fascination with Stesichoros's adjectives, the footnote as rupture, as that which resists the code of the text proper, provides latches of being; and as Zizek argues, serves an ontological as well as a discursive purpose.

With these three questions of content, address, and ontology in mind then the style of a footnote becomes particularly relevant, symptomatic, and the overly carnivalesque footnote becomes a symptom of a text that is unable to keep a grasp on its own narrative. At the very least, as representative of a split consciousness in the text or subject, or as symptom, the rules for footnotes are different than they are for the text proper. Part of what Leader is doing discursively when he argues that his chapters, "Like footnotes . . . aim to be suggestive" (7),[45] is providing a rhetorical frame. By comparing his own "style" to that of footnotes, he gives himself every discursive liberty to debase, contradict and overthrow structure and logic if necessary.

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[45] Leader's style is to tie disparate threads of research and analysis together, bringing together theorists of like philosophies and approaches and using them to illustrate one another. In order to illustrate Klein's

The difficulty in reading such a libertine text is that one can never be certain of the thesis, as it shifts, changes, and dances on just ahead. In introducing his sixth chapter, Leader points out that "Lacan's theory of the mirror phase shadows Klein's notion of a depressive position," and that he will try to show "the way in which they were both engaging with similar clinical questions" (8). This initially implies a dialectical reading, showing how both theorists circle the same question, and how they are each able to elucidate something in the other's work. It seems, however, as ~~Leader~~ progresses, that in this instance something keeps bringing him back to Klein, and, more particularly, to Klein's theory on infantile depression. A crucial comparison of Klein as an overtly present analyst and Lacan's absent analyst / analysand is neglected in favour of "the right direction as [he tries] to explore the linguistic, symbolic dimension of the Kleinian concept" (8).

The footnote, like the frame, can be a rhetorical device that shapes the reader's experience of the text, can provide context and sourcing the way a more explanatory introduction can – as discussed with regards to the proemium in *Autobiography of Red* and Miller's introduction to Hassoun – but the sort of psychoanalyzing of footnotes I have done here and the three questions that have come to the fore, help read back to this study's previous discussions of the other two texts and reformulate their summaries.

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thoughts around symbolism and infant anxiety, Leader goes to a case study of Susan Isaac's, for "the separation of symbolic equations from symbolism as such, although stressed by Klein, remains distant from her arguments about the structure of recognition" (210). Isaac, as Leader considers her approach Kleinian, can illustrate and stand in for Klein. This approach to theory and study as prosthesis for a Frankenstein body might, as Leader argues, provide context and source connections between thinkers, but it also runs the danger of decontextualizing the analyst's or theorist's own work at the price of making connections.

Indeed, the question of frames comes down to those three questions, of what could not be said in the text proper, whom it is being addressed to, and how it affects the subject. Ultimately then the multiple purposes of the introductions and footnotes already discussed – as explanatory, protective, meddling, desiring, and fascinating texts – become apparent. In these three works reading can be no simple matter, and there is something larger at stake, an ontological agenda that could not be completed without these frames and footnotes.[46]

Frames makes us wait, make us desire or fear the tale to come and ultimately forces us to pay attention, to listen more carefully. So then the reader who reads through frames is a little amorous even at first as he or she wonders after the other's desire and waits, listening, to find it. Approached a little more amorously, as Roland Barthes regards the love triangle in *A Lover's Discourse*, "The loved being is desired because another or others have shown the subject that such a being is desirable: however particular, amorous desire is discovered by induction" (136). So the frame first shows us what to desire as readers by drawing attention to one thing or another, but further, as Barthes suggests, "In order to show you where your desire is, it is enough to forbid it to you *a little*" (emphasis his, 137). We must not forget the time of the frame as it stands as the beginning before the beginning. The space of the frame is a space of waiting, anticipation, and anxiety – the perpetual question, what will possibly happen next?

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[46] And what of Leader's own footnotes? It is curious to wonder what the ontological status is of a footnote's footnote.

iv. THE PHILOSOPHER OF SANDWICHES

Can human nature not survive
Without a listener?

Emily Dickinson

in the end, *enfin*, the only way to defeat myth was with metaphor.

Freud: The Paris Notebooks

Matt Cohen

The first epigraph above is also the epigraph from "Autobiography of Red" and as such it raises the desire for witness from the start and introduces Geryon's desire before the reader even meets him. Geryon is a creature who poses this question to his own life. His "monstrosity" comes in part from the fact that he searches for himself in the people who sparsely populate his life: first his mother and his brother, then Herakles, then later in life a grown Herakles and Herakles' new lover Ancash. This epigraph, this question that Dickinson poses has a twist in "Autobiography of Red," though, for it is Geryon who is the listener, longing to witness others, fearful of his own winged, red self. The question of who Geryon is leaves no recourse but to ask, "whom does Geryon desire or love?" As the conventions of autobiography dictate, this is first a question of origins.

Though the two principal others in his life are his mother and Herakles, what Geryon's story points out to us is that each family drama or romance has a social context.

This is first evident in Geryon's relationship with his mother, which finds its dynamics through and with his relationship to his brother:

> *What does* each *mean?*
> Geryon had asked his mother. She never lied to him. Once she said the
> meaning
> it would stay.
> She answered, Each *means like you and your brother each have your own*
> *room.*
> He clothed himself in this strong word *each.*
> He spelled it at school on the blackboard (perfectly) with a piece of red
> silk chalk.
> He thought softly
> of other words he could keep with him like *beach* and *screach.* Then they
> moved
> Geryon into his brother's room. (26)

The mother's lesson, in some regard an invitation to the symbolic, is undermined by the reality of family life and the mother's lack of authority in the family drama. It's the family drama, the arrival of the grandmother that wrecks the meaning of "each," turning the mother's word against itself. Yet what ultimately gets foregrounded here, though Geryon cannot see it yet, is the contextual nature of language. Geryon imagines that because "each" means one thing in a given moment and something else at another moment, that his mother has lied, or that at the very least her truth is fallible.

This section, though called "Each," is not just about the word "each" no longer meaning what his mother said it did, but the new meaning that stands in for it when he moves in to share his brother's room the trauma brought about by his brother's love and abuse. His brother bribes him for sexual favours using marbles, treats and other things he wants:

> And so they developed an economy of sex
> for cat's eyes.
> Pulling the stick makes my brother happy, thought Geryon.
>   *Don't tell Mom,*
> said his brother.
> Voyaging into the rotten ruby of the night became a contest
>   of freedom
> and bad logic.
> *Come on Geryon.*
> *No.*
> *You owe me.*
> *No.*
> *I hate you. I don't care. I'll tell Mom. Tell Mom what?*
> *How nobody likes you at school.*
> Geryon paused. Facts are bigger in the dark. (28)

From the world in which a word defined by his mother "never lied to him" (26), where "[o]nce she said the meaning [of a word] it would stay" (26) he moves into the nights of his brother's bedroom, to the "contest between freedom and bad logic" (28), where "facts are bigger in the dark."

This ambiguity, this struggle "between freedom and bad logic," is the impetus behind Geryon's confusion around the boundaries of who he is in relation to this familial and semantic context which threatens and loves him. It is what leads him, one night after his brother has molested him, to a self-protective turn:

> Geryon would climb back up to his bunk,
> recover his pajama bottoms and lie on his back. He lay very
> 	straight
> in the fantastic temperatures
> of the red pulse as it sank away and he thought about the
> 	difference
> between outside and inside.
> Inside is mine, he thought. (28-29)

It is this distinction between inside and outside that he believes will protect him, help him to preserve something beyond his brother's bad logic and molestation. Moreover, it is this distinction between inside and outside that will structure most of his adult relationships, his "autobiography," his camera voyeurism, his fear of his own desire and "monstrous" identity.[47]

Even at this early stage, he creates mediating objects, things which will help him negotiate the distance between inside and outside. The day after he discovers the difference between the two, "was also the day he began his autobiography. In this work Geryon set down all inside things / particularly his own heroism / and early death much to the despair of the community. He coolly omitted / all outside things" (29). This delineation is illusory and provisional, but it reassures him here.

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[47] This question of inside / outside is also the peculiar debate we discussed in relation to the classicist's frame to "The Autobiography" proper. The polarized critics seem to love either the inside or the outside of *Autobiography*, but few are ambivalent, seeing the mutually constitutive relationship between them. Geryon, here, also has difficulty seeing inside and outside ambivalently and fears the loss of what is inside.

This attention to "heroism" and "death" demark an epic convention to what he is writing and seems in direct contradiction to the observation that he "coolly omitted all outside things" (29). Epic conventions are ostensibly and utterly outside, one would think, so in order to make sense of this claim the reader must imagine that "inside" also symbolizes fantasy, or Geryon's own desires that he does not admit outwardly, not just the literal actions he records. Geryon's fraught relationship with the borders of his identity is further illustrated in section III, "Rhinestones," when his mother is going out for the evening and leaving him and his brother with a babysitter. He notes that "He knew the sound / of the door closing / had to be kept out of him" (30) and in order to do so he "turned all attention to his inside world" (30). Interestingly enough, one of the ways in which he can attend to his inside world here is through knowing how long it will be before his mother returns; even though he cannot tell time, he can measure how long she will be absent and steal himself and his inner world against it.

Indeed sounds are the things he must work most at excluding from his inner world. They seem to have the most profound effect. After working at excluding the sound of the door closing, he "very much wanted / to keep the baby-sitter's voice out of him" (31) and when she offers to read him a bedtime book he chooses an instruction manual for calling loons so that he "would keep her wrong voice away / from words that belonged to his mother" (32). In this sense Geryon is very aware of how context can alter the meanings of words.

In contrast, the next section, "IV. Tuesday," tells the story of Geryon and his mother's night at home alone, every second Tuesday when his father and brother went to hockey practice. What his mother says on the phone shows how Geryon includes things in his autobiography of inner things:

> *Geryon? fine he's right here working on his autobiography*
>
> . . . .
>
> *No it's a sculpture he doesn't know how to write yet*
>
> . . . .
>
> *Oh this and that stuff he finds outside Geryon's always*
> *finding things*
> *aren't you Geryon?*
> She winked at him over the telephone. He winked back
> using both eyes
> and returned to work.
> He had ripped up some pieces of crispy paper he found
> in her purse to use for hair
> and was gluing these to the top of the tomato. (35)

"Autobiography" traditionally implies writing, but Geryon's autobiography is made up of everything but words. Writing his autobiography using objects, Geryon should be a master of the object world, but here he doesn't know the difference between a "wink" and a blink, and as his mother goes on to reveal, he does not know the difference between "crispy paper" and a ten dollar bill. This is an autobiography of uncertain things, objects the autobiographer does not comprehend placed to stand in for other internal objects that the reader can only imagine the autobiographer also does not understand.

Yet each of these objects does have some symbolic meaning, does seem connected to his mother in some way. He is making a portrait of his mother, "gluing a cigarette to a tomato" (34) perhaps for lips, to show his mother smoking, and he rips up money to use for hair and glues it to the top of the tomato. His inner world, then, the world of his "autobiography," might not be made up of "inner" objects, but is a world composed of things caught in a symbolic equation with his mother, and represents on some level an attempt to symbolically connect with her, perhaps to prevent her from leaving or to keep her from being absent during those times when his brother, the babysitter, or the realm of the school threaten to subsume his identity.

When Geryon learns to write, he reveals that his autobiography was previously made of physical objects because perhaps words were inadequate. Words had already betrayed him, taken different meanings in different contexts and altered based on who spoke them. Those same words, however, eventually form a narrative, and then Geryon discovers their other powerful implications. In his "autobiography" he writes down "the facts," and these are the very basics details of the traditional and epic storytelling of his own story:

> *Total Facts Known About Geryon.*
>
> *Geryon was a monster everything about him was red.*
>
>   *Geryon lived*

> *on an island in the Atlantic called the Red Place. Geryon's*
> *mother*
> *was a river that runs to the sea the Red Joy River Geryon's*
> *father*
> *was gold. Some say Geryon had six hands six feet some say*
> *wings.*
> *Geryon was red so were his strange cattle. Herakles came*
> *one*
> *day killed Geryon got the cattle.* (37)

His teacher asks his mother at Parent-Teacher Day, "*Where does he get his ideas*?" and his mother asks a question back: "*Does he ever write anything with a happy ending*?" (38). Upon hearing his mother ask this, Geryon goes to the back of the room and changes the ending: "*New Ending. / All over the world the beautiful red breezes went on blowing hand / in hand*" (38). He does not change the narrative, only creates a flourish at the end that cannot upend the violence that is the ending of the traditional Herakles story – he can only move it slightly from violence to ambivalence. It might be a start for Geryon, but he is, at this stage, unable to imagine something outside the epic code.

His awareness of his own epic tradition marks him as the melancholic extraordinaire and anticipates the existence of Herakles before Herakles even introduces himself. Geryon has only just learned to write, and his sense of writing obeys tradition, here mirroring the information found in the sixteen fragments that make up "Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros." In forthcoming pages, as Geryon meets Herakles and the romance unfolds, it becomes clear that all that Geryon's writing foreshadows is the initial bad end to their relationship – none of the facts are literally true here.

Caught between an inner world he cannot adequately protect and a tyrannical external world, Geryon looks for things to mediate, to protect him. Words and stories both offer a connection to his mother (a connection he tries to preserve), and are the tools that, by the very act of mediating, distance him from her and lead to a more fraught separation. Something is missing. Something that would bind Geryon to words and narratives more cohesively. Significations shift and alter too easily and the membrane between him and the world is far too thin for him to bear. The autobiography is not enough.

When he first meets Herakles, Geryon's world shifts, and so must his autobiography. They meet at the bus station as Herakles is disembarking, and, Geryon describes it as "one of those moments / that is the opposite of blindness. / The world poured back and forth between their eyes once or twice" (39). This is an idealized visual moment, one that all others will refer back to, for it embodies what Geryon is searching for: to see and be seen. In the days that follow, Geryon forgoes all that is not visual, and the narrator notes that Geryon "had recently relinquished speech" (40). At the same time, his old manner of writing an autobiography shifts: "The autobiography, / which Geryon worked on from the age of five to the age of forty-four, / had recently taken the form / of a photographic essay" (60). So powerful is this connection that Geryon will give up composing an autobiography of fetishes connected to his mother and begin to compose a more visual autobiography.

This idealized visual moment mirrors a similar moment in Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband* where the narrator describes first meeting the husband:

> It was Latin class, late spring, late afternoon, the passive
>   periphrastic,
> for some reason I turned in my seat
> and there he was.
> You know how they say a Zen butcher makes one correct
>   cut and the whole ox
> falls apart
> like a puzzle. (49)

The narrator of *The Beauty* is undone, like Geryon, though Geryon in that pure visual moment with Herakles does not know he has suffered the Zen butcher's cut. The miracle of that moment will leave him scrambling to find it again.

Through his autobiography (turned photographic essay), Geryon tries to undo the puzzle of the world that does not live up to that pure visual moment. He is, however, just learning to take photographs, and his sense of this visual world links back to the original visual moment of connection with Herakles but extends forwards as the scopic field shifts – just as every fetish object was connected to his mother originally, after he meets Herakles in that visual moment, every photographic image is connected to Herakles. First his mother, in the section entitled "Click," uses the camera as a way of communicating with Geryon since, "He had recently relinquished speech" (40). Frustrated by his lack of response to her questions about Herakles, she suggests, "*Maybe I'll just keep talking / and if I say anything intelligent you can take a picture of it*" (40). She makes a connection here between the moment chosen for the photograph and the truth of intelligence, so that when she observes, "*you probably know / more about sex than I do* – and turned to stub [her cigarette] in the sink as he clicked the shutter" (40) the "click" becomes a moment of communication, between subject and object, a measure of importance and truth. Geryon is learning to communicate through the medium.

Herakles's grandmother's photograph "Red Patience," becomes Geryon's next lesson in subject and object, and as he first notes, he "did not know why he found the photograph disturbing" (51). Both subject and time lapse seem to contribute to his disturbance:

> A photograph that has compressed
> on its motionless surface
> fifteen different moments of time, nine hundred seconds
> of bombs moving up
> and ash moving down
> and pines in the kill process. Geryon did not know why
> he kept going back to it. (51)

The original moment of visual connection with Herakles led Geryon to explore photography as a visual medium, yet he discovers that the medium itself questions distance and time, the two things he was hoping the photographic image would capture, not question.

Herakles knows better than Geryon what it is about the photographic image that disturbs him:

> *It's not the photograph that disturbs you it's you don't*

> *understand what photography is.*
>
> *Photography is disturbing,* said Geryon.
>
> *Photography is a way of playing with perceptual*
>
> *relationships.*
>
> *Well exactly.*
>
> *But you don't need a camera to tell you that.* (65)

In a further conversation about the photograph with Herakles's grandmother in the same section, they both note further the perceptive work photographs do:

> *Do you mean the silence. But all photographs are silent.*
>
> *Don't be facile you*
>
> *might as well say all mothers*
>
> *are women. Well aren't they? Of course but that tells*
>
> *you nothing. Question is*
>
> *how they use it – given*
>
> *the limits of the form.* (66-67)

First Herakles points to the way photographs can play with perceptual reality, then his grandmother points to the disturbing nature of photographs being somehow grounded in how they use the limits of their form, their misleading silence.

These questions of form and perceptual reality are inseparable from the subject of the photograph in question, "Red Patience." The destruction he sees in the photograph is the result of a volcanic eruption, and this idea of a volcano becomes an obsession of his, and dynamically introduces us to how he now, in this later stage, perceives the work of his autobiography:

> This was when Geryon liked to plan
> his autobiography, in that blurred state
> between awake and asleep when too many intake valves
> are open in the soul.
> Like the terrestrial crust of the earth
> which is proportionately ten times thinner than an
> eggshell, the skin of the soul
> is a miracle of mutual pressures.
> Millions of kilograms of force pounding up from the
> earth's core on the inside to meet
> the cold air of the world and stop,
> as we do, just in time. (60)

This discussion of the thin eggshell of the soul is bracketed in an almost non-sequitur turn by Geryon musing on when he likes to plan his autobiography on one side and an observation that it has become a "photographic essay," on the other. Juxtaposition leads us to assume that the autobiography fulfills this very function, as skin of the soul that maintains the "miracle of mutual pressures" (60).

This is perhaps just a more elaborate and metaphorical way of describing why he created the autobiography in the first place, where he "set down all inside things" (29), and "coolly omitted all outside things" (29). Yet, there is something more complex going on here, as it seems what is inside has become something slightly fearful, capable of destruction if the metaphor is meant to be taken seriously. The autobiography, like the surface of the earth, is bound to rupture and release what is inside at some point. Thus, volcanoes preoccupy Geryon fearfully and yet with anticipation.[48]

This struggle between pressures, between what is inside and outside, is a recurring motif in Carson's work: in *The Beauty of the Husband*, the intricate claustrophobia of a woman grieving the loss of her marriage; in the later part of "The Anthropology of Water," the narrator's affection, awe, and distance from her brother; and in "Irony is Not Enough: Essay on my Life as Catherine Deneuve," a professor's inexpressible passion for one of her students. As Halliday argues, "More than half of Carson is a flaming romantic, and proud of it. She experiences the world as a realm where passions far exceed opportunities for expression and fulfillment, exceed the capacity of mere flesh to contain them, while remaining always the most important realities" (124). In Carson's work, the inner world dominates and the "real" world becomes an empty mythology.

For Geryon, this conflict between the inner reality and the external world is most apparent in his confusion around what the photographic idea of "subject matter" is. In this perceptual mess, he is unable to discern the boundaries of the medium or what it means to him as a subject. There is no photograph of the "Lava man," the one who survived the eruption while locked in a jail cell, and when Geryon tries to imagine what such an image would look like, Herakles's grandmother's reaction is telling: "*What if you took a fifteen-minute exposure of a man in jail, let's say the lava / has just reached his window?* / he asked. *I think you are confusing subject and object,* she said. / *Very likely,* said Geryon" (52). What Herakles' grandmother is referring to here is not immediately evident. Later in the novel, Herakles' lover Ancash will relate the tale of those who survive volcanoes and then it becomes evident that the Lava Man is in some sense Geryon here, and that he wants to see a photographic image of himself and cannot is reason enough for Granny to accuse him of confusing subject and object. Generally though every photographic image is a fetish for the original visual moment of connection with Herakles and the fact that they compose his "autobiography," means for Geryon there can only be confusion between subject and object.

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[48] The infant's aggression we have already discussed in relation to Leader's chapter on Klein and Lacan is similar to this image of the volcano. The infant's depressive position and struggle with aggression towards the other all circles the same central issue of finding a balance, that "miracle of mutual pressures" between the inner and outer reality.

This confusion between subject and object is also apparent on a textual level. Throughout the narrative it is difficult to ascertain who is speaking, since all speech is put in italics and yet the convention of starting a new line when someone new speaks is abandoned. Thus as when Geryon speaks with Herakles's grandmother (in the lines already quoted), their dialogue flows in one long line: "*Do you mean the silence. But all photographs are silent. / Don't be facile*" (66). It is only through tone and content that the reader can discern that the first sentence is Geryon, and the second and third are Herakles's grandmother. In order to differentiate the subject of the "autobiography" from the objects or others, the reader must read contextually, and in the process share Geryon's confusion between subject and object, subject and others.

The visual world was first and foremost for Geryon a connection with Herakles, before things got complicated. That originary moment was a pure visual moment where subject and object, self and other did not exist. From that moment on Geryon's obsession with the visual, with photography, provides the possibility of both capturing the visual moment and freezing time, maintaining a connection to that past.[49] This connection, however, was fraught in the early stages of Geryon's photographic career for the limits and contradiction of photography as a medium frightened him. The ability to alter perceptual reality and for the image to lie were a threat to that originary moment of inspiration.

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[49] Photography is for Geryon implicitly nostalgic. There is a similar play of nostalgia in Carson's "Kinds of Water: An Essay on the Road to Compostela" where the narrator and "My Cid" are pilgrims whose journey

Yet the photographic image, both expressive and threatening, seems to also betray a corresponding attraction in Geryon. He confesses that his favourite weapon is a "cage" (33), and Herakles reveals that all of Geryon's designs "are about captivity" (55). Whether it is to capture the enemy in the first instance or keep the enemy out is unclear. The painting of the "red-winged loveslave" (55) Geryon paints on the priest's garage, and that Herakles objects to, though, is a little less unclear. There is a correlation between the photographic images Geryon is attracted to and the cages and captivity he evokes elsewhere, each marking the ability to represent certain things and refuse others – variations on containment.

It is a paradoxical image that Carson's narrator in *The Beauty of the Husband* also experiences, though in her case through writing:

> He was not wrong that sad anthropologist who told
> us the primary function of
> writing is to enslave human beings. Intellectual and
> aesthetic uses came later.
> Little holes that widen and break.

---

is shaped by the photographs they take. The photos, like Geryon's, are impossible images: "In the photograph the two of us are bending over the map, looking for Castrogeriz which has been obscured by water drops. Here is an enlargement. You can see, within each drop, a horizen stretching, hard, in full wind" (146-147). As in *Autobiography*, these impossible images indicate we have reached a place in the narrative where "reality-testing" is useless – the essential truth must bend the laws of perception to be perceived.

> Letters arrived.
>
> Rapidly now holes multiply themselves and pour toward
>
> collision, concentrically.
>
> By letters the husband bound her to him. (93)

Just as the narrator of *Beauty* feels bound by her husband's letters, Geryon feels bound to Herakles through photographs and the visual register.

Containment, capturing, and caging are all tropes that again connect to that first pure visual moment with Herakles, but also speak to his initial desire with the "autobiography" to preserve a barrier between inside and outside. In some sense, then, this is also an attempt to capture or fix the other, but more importantly the other's desire. The "red-winged loveslave" is undeniably Geryon, undeniably subjugated and object of the Other's gaze and desire. Yet this is a double desire for capture, for the image of the loveslave is also the attempt to solicit the gaze of the Other, here represented by Herakles – this bondage is ambivalent.

Yet that Geryon as a child anticipates the Epic story as his own is a tell-tale turn, remarkably like the melancholic's anxiety, as Miller points out: "Faced with uncertainty they fill it in with the certitude that something terrible is about to happen to them" (xxvii). In the next section, in the discussion of Hassoun's case study of Janus, it will become apparent how for the melancholic, endings can be found in their beginnings, and the other way around in a self-fulfilling prophecy manner. As a child, Geryon's autobiography was a collage, and those objects reminding him of his mother were a way of negotiating and protecting the inside world he attempted to share with his mother and the outside world where his brother molested him. As a teenager and then an adult, Geryon's desire to compose an "autobiography" of objects that refer back to his mother shifts, first through meeting Herakles, and then later through meeting Ancash. As Geryon's autobiography changes senses (from tactile, to visual, to auditory) he journeys to the limits of himself, and ultimately has to relinquish how he self-consciously mediates the border between himself and the world, forgoing his melancholia for a new mythology.

v. EXILE

In Jacques Hassoun's *The Cruelty of Depression: On Melancholy*, the question of origins is a drama that Hassoun marks out with his first case study on a man he names Janus. The case study, Hassoun's theorizing of weaning, and his imagining of melancholia's origins, define a threshold moment that shapes the infant's and later the adult's ability to deal with loss. Hassoun's inability to resist the third term of the imaginary Origin of weaning stands as a symptom of what is occurring in the transference and the counter-transference. Whether the imaginary origin is a necessary fiction or a projection of the drama already occurring in the analytical drama, its central importance to Hassoun's and psychoanalysis' theories will be analyzed here.

Hassoun begins the chapter on Janus with an epigraph from Lacan that sets up weaning as a central issue to the chapter and case study, but the epigraph does not immediately explain what is discussed in the body of this chapter. The chapter proper drops the issue of weaning and in an almost non-sequitur turn begins instead with a drama, one that due to the non-sequitur works like a mystery:

> He phones me, anxious-sounding and a little breathless, his words come hurtling out, as though struggling to keep pace with some thought that's trapped in some as yet unfathomable drama. There's too much urgency in his voice. I ask him to call me back tomorrow, not really expecting that he will: tension this high rarely can stand the wait. But he does call back and shows up for his appointment at the time we've set. (9)

There is the "unfathomable drama" that Janus is having with himself, and there is the more apparent drama that occurs between Janus and Hassoun, one that reveals itself in Hassoun refusing Janus's desire and introducing the question of time into the analytic relationship from the start. This does not immediately seem to have much to do with the question of weaning as it is introduced in the epigraph, yet the question still stands as a frame, some mysterious key that will eventually unlock the mysteries of Janus, perhaps. In any event, by leaving the connection unexplained, for the time being, Hassoun involves us in that "unfathomable drama."

The mystery seems to be one measured in distance. It is first the distance of the phone call, that blind plea for help, and it is then the distance that Hassoun creates by telling Janus to call back.[50] It is odd that Hassoun in the drama seems not certain why he refuses to see Janus, why he insists that he call back:

> All past attempts to commit himself to analysis had broken off quite abruptly. This time he was determined to stick with it – and the only reason for that was apparently that my immediate request that he "call back tomorrow" established a distance that had, unwittingly on my part, struck just the right note. (10)

In this drama, Hassoun gives us no motivation for his request that Janus should call back tomorrow, but the result is "unwittingly" found. Was it out of bother, out of a lack of care or fear? The reader cannot know, but it is possible to wonder if certain pleas, certain demands have their own refusal built in. Perhaps the measure of Janus's urgency and anxiety, his passion, insists upon a corresponding lack of interest or anxiety in Hassoun.

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[50] The measure of Janus's distance from Hassoun and the corresponding distance of his banishment from the family household when he was a kid, all seem vaguely similar to Gunnars's preoccupation with and desire for distance in her novels.

All the reader has of the drama, however, is Janus's reaction. When Hassoun says, "I ask him to call back tomorrow, not really expecting he will," he takes an analytic stance that provokes Janus's desire. On the level of transference at least Hassoun has participated in the drama, "unwittingly" as he admits. Unwitting or not, he has caught Janus's attention. He insists on putting time and waiting into the analytic relationship and gives Janus's anxiety an object – the analyst's own desire or lack of it. The wait stands in for Hassoun's desire.

The drama, as Hassoun points out, seems to have something to do with a memory of Janus's that Hassoun first thought to be a "screen memory." Janus's childhood seems relatively unremarkable other than the one memory:

> One fact, however, does stand out against the deadly monotony: when his mother brings another child into the world, the twelve-year-old Janus is forced to turn his room over to his little sister. Overnight, it's as though he's lost face, 'been thrown into exile far from his immediate family, in the outbuildings of his grandparents' farm, which is actually quite close. For a long time this fact – which I regarded as a screen memory – was something of a riddle. It seems to have marked a turning point in his history, yet one still blank, uninscribed. (10)

There is a correlation between Hassoun telling Janus to call back and Janus's parents exiling him to the outbuildings. Both are about the creation of a desire for an other who does not seem to mourn the loss created. This idea of "exile," of being "thrown," seems to correlate to the drama that Hassoun unwittingly played a part in when he told Janus to come back later, when he did not take interest in the immediate drama.

The memory in question though, as Hassoun points out, is not easily unpacked. As the drama is unfathomable, in a sense so is the memory:

> The event, neither repressed nor denied, is all too conspicuously present. This indiscreet presence is grounds for a quasi-legal "case" the subject will – short of clearing it up – defend to the death.
>
> Only twice did Janus mention this incident, as though, both belonging *and* not belonging to his history, it gave his existence a style, keeping him from another lapse into heroin: he needed to go on living his damaged existence in the hope of finding out the real story. (11)

Hassoun points to how this incident gives Janus's existence "a style," yet more apparent here is the style that Hassoun gives it. From the beginning of the chapter he has staged the case study as a dramatic mystery, and as he represents this event in Janus's history he constructs it as incomplete, only one more clue on the way to find "the real story." Thus, it is a style that both analysand and analyst are attracted to and participate in constructing – they are provoked to collaboration by it.

Yet I do not mean to suggest that Hassoun takes on the role of a cold and distanced detective in relation to the mystery. The counter-transference might in part be about Hassoun imagining himself in that role, but in his attempts "to represent this event," he goes on in detail imagining how "we might envision" it, slowly slipping under the analogies he finds:

> In attempting to represent this event, we might envision some sort of mnemic enclave, a twilit no-man's-land, or view it perhaps as we would those molecular crystals whose only partially attainable dissolution gives

> the liquid in question an undefinable opacity: since, for all its apparent clarity such opacity signals the presence of a body similar in nature to the solution, yet so incongruous, it can be perceived only as mysterious and displaced. (10-11)

An analytical Goldilocks here, Hassoun tries one image bed after another until he lies down on the image of the crystals. He notes on this last image the contradictory properties of the "apparent clarity" and the "mysterious and displaced" aspect of the crystals after their "only partially attainable dissolution." Though by emphasizing these aspects of the memory he points to how it dynamically creates a seductive mystery for Janus, and the "hope of finding out the real story" (11), there is in his emphasis a counter-transference, a desire for an object both clear and mysterious. The memory has both an identificatory purpose for Janus and an analytical one, for it, apparently, evokes the other's desire. The phone call where Hassoun refused Janus's desire is paralleled by Janus's memory that refuses Hassoun's desire – this seems to be the next stage in the analytical tango.

The question of Janus's style is essential here, and made essential by both Janus and Hassoun, each enticing a reader (for Janus the analyst Hassoun, and for Hassoun, the reader and Janus himself) and creating "the hope of finding out the real story" (11). In *Autobiography of Red*, the classicist's frame sets up and frames certain expectations that the actual "Autobiography" itself undermines and resists in its search and passion for "substances." With Hassoun's *Cruelty of Depression*, Miller's introductory frames sets up Hassoun as an authority, and then Hassoun frames the case study almost as a detective drama from the start. There is a chain of expectation and desire here that facilitates the mystery aspect of the case study, set up in part by Hassoun, and supported by Janus's "style." It is, moreover, a narrative where each of them frame the text as something looking for its hidden origins, the climax of the "unfathomable drama."

Hassoun uses the dramatic question of Janus's memory to frame what he provides as the dramatic answer: the infant's development or inhibition at the stage of weaning. He calls weaning a "failure of the first form of identification," (18), and argues that, "This absence of object (which, in Janus's case, came to constitute a trauma at the second stage, contemporary with the event represented by the episode of having to give up the room) might be termed a failure in weaning"(18). Later stage traumas resonate with the very first form of identification, or, said differently, find a sympathetic structure already in place.

It is this primary identification, then, which needs to be more closely examined. At this stage, there are three key players: father, mother, and infant. Hassoun's infant needs to be shown what to do: "From this point on, we can say that the child can give up only what has been constituted as lost by the Other. It is in this operation that the object is constituted"(26). The "Other" here is constituted through the collaboration of the father and the mother. If there is a breakdown in this relationship between parents, wherein the mother does not successfully mourn the loss of the breast in the weaning stage, then the infant cannot successfully mourn the loss of the breast. This is the failed mourning discussed in relation to Klein's conception of the infant's depressive position, though what Hassoun emphasizes is not the nature of the weaning, but the manner in which the mother deals with that grief. Thus, Hassoun asks, "Isn't there, in this common path (of weaning) the child and its mother both tread, an experience of shared mourning?" (28).

Such a failed mourning leaves the infant without an object, indeed, unseparated from the Other and unable to establish an object:

> Henceforth, the melancholic is this unseparated object that has failed to be. As such, he's a piece of trash trying to form itself as the cause of (non-) desire, of impossible desire, for anyone else likely to take an interest in him. (28)

This is a perverse turn, where the need for an object drives the melancholic to stand in for the object. He is more interested in the other's desire than his own.

Janus's addiction, his attention to the drug, is a dramatic dance, looking for an other through instating a third term. For Hassoun, Janus's

> impossible situation would be the premise for an impairment of identification with the father, whose function it is to uphold the Law, leaving a hole, a gaping that would make the infans a being in whom the only thing that can apparently create a limit is this lethal, ultimate object . . . the drug. (17-18)

Hassoun is primarily looking at Janus's drug addiction here, yet it stands as a partial answer to the melancholic question. Just as Isobel's hysteria can be read as an answer, an attempt to overcome what had become for her a disabling failed mourning or melancholia, here, as Hassoun points out, for Janus the drug is an attempt to reinstate the missing Law and create a limit to the subject's being. The drug makes him both subject and object, the passive purveyor of his own shit.

The cure that Hassoun as analyst represents, then, can be seen as a successful stepping-into that third-term relationship that Janus already has with the drug and his addiction. The third term, then, is at its basis an attempt to restage the drama of weaning, of mourning the loss of the breast in an attempt to instate some Other and successfully enter the symbolic as a subject. Drug, analyst, each stand in, as the melancholic tries to reenact the drama of primary identification, each time attempting to find the mother's mourning, thereby finding his own loss.

So why the attempt? The drama has two parts, just as the initial failure had two. To understand the allure of the failure, a closer look at the drama with the mother is required. Hassoun argues that "[u]nder such conditions, the melancholic is the child of a mother who never stops proclaiming: 'That man, your father, means nothing to me,' a position altogether different from that of the mother who says: That man, your father, means nothing to you." (53) The father has no power in the drama, in the absence of the mother's desire. She cannot disinvest the breast for she accepts no other objects. Hassoun goes on to specify that "[m]elancholia is therefore always a question raised about feminine jouissance: not phallic jouissance, nor what has been labeled jouissance of the mother (which would refer to psychosis), but rather a jouissance centred upon the seemingly untransferable object"(55). The undesired father, the mother who refused to disinvest the breast, all create a connection to a jouissance – the jouissance of an untransferable object. The drama ultimately involves a failure, a tragedy if you will, but along the way tells the story of jouissance, a connection with the Other, despite the fact that it will fail in the end.

In *Autobiography of Red*, there is a similar connection to the Other in Geryon's initial autobiography, the collage of fetish objects that attempt to make a symbolic connection with his mother. It is true that the father is mostly absent, in a literal sense, and that Geryon seems to be lacking an adhesiveness that would connect him to the symbolic in a meaningful and more lasting way. Yet it could be equally true that that connection could have occurred if it were not for the brother's intervention. Would even a present father been able to counteract the rupture caused by the brother's abuse? It is an unanswerable question, but at least in the context of Geryon's story, there is no longing for a father, or lamenting of his absence.

The perverse melancholic attempts to stand in for the object that never was both to preserve the mother (by upholding her desire and not making her into a bad object) and to find some otherness, a location for his desire. As in other forms of melancholia, the subject still takes his or her own ego as object, but in the case of the perverse melancholic, it is the ego as an object of the Other's desire. This is something that might have a resonance in other forms of melancholia, since the self is inseparable from the world and other desires, but the distinction here is that the Other's desire is the ruling and motivating force, giving the melancholic a sort of mania, a manic search for what would make him or her the perfect object.

It becomes apparent, then, how in Geryon's case the repertoire of an autobiography he attempts to collect of "inside" things is an attempt to compose a catalogue of things associated with his mother for two purposes: objects associated with her might provoke or sustain his mother's desire; there is the possibility, with enough objects, of symbolically creating something to stand in for the mother – a Frankenstein object / subject. However tenuous this second relationship, it is an attempt to incorporate the mother, both to contain her symbolically (thereby entering the symbolic) and preserve her against that very insistence of symbolic law. Incorporation is a seductive impulse, but consuming and cannibalistic nonetheless.

What Geryon's family drama shows us more literally is that the Oedipal stage, or any other formative moment, such as the primary identification Hassoun discusses, is never simply a battle between mother and father. Siblings and extended family members (even grandmothers who kick you out of your room) play a part. The law of the father, then, is never something entirely attributable to the father, but is something reached or abandoned collaboratively and systematically. As Geryon knows from the start, context is everything.

vi. THE ORIGINS OF DEPRESSION

Whereas Hassoun looked to the origins of depression in the moment of weaning, Leader focuses on a moment in infantile development where he argues Klein's and Lacan's theories shadow one another: Klein's theorizing of infantile depression and Lacan's theorizing of the mirror stage. In both cases, Leader sees their theories as seemingly responding to a central question that Freud had raised: "Freud had wondered what 'new psychical mechanism' had to operate to initiate narcissism and to turn the ego into a libidinal object" (198). Freud's question, Klein's infantile depression, and Lacan's mirror stage, it seems, circle around the same issue: the infant's acquisition of language and how it maps it on his or her body.

Leader focuses first on Klein's theorizing of the inffant's development leading up to the depressive position. Intrinsic to Klein's conception of this position is the infant's 'death instinct' or the destructive force that rules the infant:

> The background to the depressive position is the familiar battlefield of the Kleinian child. The baby contains a quantity of 'death instinct' that it has been unable fully to relay outside itself, creating a state of tension in the ego felt as anxiety. Klein remains faithful to her interpretation of the Freudian thesis, elaborated in the early 1920s, that there is a destructive force present from the start of life that is not the result of a set of experiences. (191)

As a provision, the always-already-there answer of this 'death instinct' serves her work well. It is the theoretical equivalent, perhaps, of Piaget's daughter's 'aseau,' the always provisional imaginary object, "a signifying element being combined in a variety of ways with a variety of different meanings . . . to strengthen the functioning of limits in the child's world" (*Freud's Footnotes* 214). Contextually, as critics like Dylan Evans point out, "The concept of the death drive was one of the most controversial concepts introduced by Freud, and many of his disciples rejected it . . . only Kleinian psychoanalysis takes the concept seriously" (32). Unable to explain the source, and more importantly needing to deal with the aggression in the present clinical setting with her analysands, Klein relied on the idea of an always already aggressive infant.[51] This aggressive infant, in its development, first develops relationships to part objects around it as it attempts to master its threatening environment and before it learns how to deal with whole objects. In the first stage of development this infant internalizes the part objects it engages with:

> For Klein, this is first of all projected on to the part objects such as the breast that make up its world, giving rise to the frustrating and persecutory breast, separated from the gratifying and good one. These objects are internalized, setting up a new battleground, since the child must fear both external and internal attacks on the part objects. This terrible situation may be seen as the first stage in the psychic development that will produce the depressive position. (191)

First internalized to attempt to master the frustrating and persecutory aspects, the partial object – principally the breast – then becomes a threat both internally and externally. This is dynamically similar to the process of incorporation discussed in relation to the melancholic and the beloved other that becomes a part of the subject's ego and leads to ambivalence. Both the first stage of development and the later depressive state have this in common, for as Klein argues, "real clinical depression is rather the effect of having failed to pass through the depressive position" (*Freud's Footnotes* 190, f.1). Each loss felt by the melancholic is resonant with an original and failed mourning.

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[51] Neither Leader's emphasis on Klein's inability to locate the source of this fount of aggression, nor our own foregrounding of the problem should suggest that Klein's work was substandard because she picked up the concept of the death drive. We should instead look to Leader's lead here, as he contextualizes Freud's question around infantile narcissism and the fact that much of Klein's work had to contend with this question.

The infant is, as a result of this introjection, subjected to a difficult symmetry that affects every move, every desire:

> The field in which these processes take place is governed by symmetry. The breast will be persecutory to the extent that the child has placed its own projected hostility in it, and with each hostile attack on a part object, the child fears a retaliation in the same form. If it wants to bite, it fears being bitten; if it wants to devour, it fears being devoured. This is the famous Kleinian *lex talionis*, the law that spears become boomerangs of equal proportion. (191)

This symmetry, interestingly enough, Leader argues "is a result of a fundamental failure of symmetry" (191). For Klein and her contemporaries, Leader suggests, "[a] key research problem . . . was how to explain the discrepancy between the presence of tender and loving parents and that of a ferocious superego" (191). This does not entirely explain the drama, and certainly does not define the internal *lex talionis* as "a result of" the failure of symmetry – that would be just a little too tidy. This discrepancy is the same discrepancy apparent in the melancholic for whom, as already discussed, "there is no correspondence, so far as we can judge, between the degree of self-debasement [in the melancholic] and its real justification" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 255). In the case of the melancholic the lament directed towards the incorporated object is a way of prolonging the lost object and attempting mastery over it. In the case of the infant in the depressive position, the relationship with the partial objects is the same. So it is not simply the lack of symmetry that defines this fear of symmetry, but that the infant has made what is good and what he fears losing (the breast) a part of him through introjection, and it is his own aggressivity and desire for mastery that returns to him.

The next stage in the infant's development is the one that leads to grief, the mourning that can move the infant through the depressive state. In that stage the infant must realize the "coextensivity of the properties good and bad:

> Since the child realizes that the object of its attacks and defenses is in fact the same as the object that she loves, she develops real feelings of 'sorrow and concern' . . . . [Klein argues that] 'the introjection of the whole loved object gives rise to concern and sorrow lest that object should be destroyed (by the "bad" objects and the id), and that these distressed feelings and fears, in addition to the paranoid set of fears and defences, constitute the depressive position.' (192)

This is the same ambivalence in the melancholic who incorporates the other and then is caught between the urge to protect and the urge to destroy that other, caught between love and hate. This would explain why Freud argues that "the occasions which give rise to the illness . . . include all those situations . . . which can impart opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 260). This ambivalence between love and hate defines the depressive moment for the infant, and it is this moment that Klein claims the melancholic never successfully negotiates.

To overcome this ambivalence, the infant must move past this sorrow, past this ambivalence and in the final stage move to what Klein defines as concurrently love and loss:

> Klein emphasizes that the depressive position develops as the infant passes from a relation to part-objects to a relation to a whole object: it is not until the object is loved as a whole that its loss can be felt as a whole. The experience of loss is central . . . (193)

With loss, with the ability to love the whole object instead of just partial objects, the infant moves from the depressive position into subjecthood. This is what the melancholic is missing, this primary loss due to the depressive position.

Leader juxtaposes Lacan's mirror stage with Klein's theorizing of the depressive position, but gives no particular reason, except to look at their similarities. This "side by side" reading first draws parallels between how the infant relates to the other. For Lacan, instead of partial and whole objects, the infant finds himself face to face with an illusory unity:

> This assumption of a whole image allows the child to transcend, at a certain level, the uncoordination of its own body: he finds unity outside himself and this imaginary lure becomes the foundation of his own ego . . . As Lacan argued, 'This illusion of unity, in which a human being is always looking forward to self-mastery, entails a constant danger of sliding back again into the chaos from which he started: it hands over the

> abyss of a dizzy Assent in which one can perhaps see the every essence of Anxiety.' (198-199)

The result of this mirror phase is that the subject "will always be in pursuit of an illusory unity that 'is luring him away from himself'" (199).

In the above quotation there are the seeds of Lacan's explanation for the mystery Klein struggled with, the source of aggression and destructiveness in the infant. Lacan's mirror phase locates this aggression in that relationship with the Other:

> If one identifies with the image of another, as well as competition for the objects valued by the other, an intrinsic aggressive tension is established between the parties and within the structure of the subject's ego itself. It is this aggressive tension that is brought into play by the register of specular identification, rather than preceding it as any developmental postulate. (200).

This is the major difference between Klein and Lacan's theorizing of infantile aggressivity.

With Hassoun, the question of weaning was the central issue, where here, even with Leader's juxtaposition of Klein and Lacan, it is clear that weaning has not only symbolic meaning, but structural meaning, though both are questions of origins. Klein retrospectively constructs this well of destructive urges, but she is not alone in this fantasy of origins. Dynamically, this retrospection, this desire for origins works similar to the paradox, with regards to the mirror stage, that Jane Gallop points to in *Reading Lacan*:

> It is a turning point in the chronology of a self, but it is also the origin, the moment of constitution of that self. What therefore precedes it?
>
> According to Palmier, "what seems to be first . . . is the anguish of the *corps morcelé* [body in bits and pieces]" (p.23). The *corps morcelé* is a Lacanian term for a violently nontotalized body image, an image psychoanalysis finds accompanied by anxiety. In the mirror stage the formation of the first self is based on the first totalized image of the body: totalized rather than in bits and pieces. (79)

The question of what precedes it becomes a mirrored question, one that says more about the theorist or analyst than it does about infantile development. Indeed, the question of what precedes the moment at the age of six months says more about psychoanalysis and its need to explain than infantile development. As Gallop observes, "There is something quite difficult about the temporal order of the mirror stage. It produces contradictions in those trying to describe it" (80). She turns to Laplanche and Pontalis, and argues, along with them, that

> [t]he mirror stage would seem to come after "the body in bits and pieces" and organize them into a unified image. But actually, that violently unorganized image only comes after the mirror stage so as to represent what came before. What appears to precede the mirror stage is simply a projection on a reflection. There is nothing on the other side of the mirror. (80)

There is a compulsion, perhaps implicit in psychoanalysis, to know what is unknowable, and this is why this quest for origins provokes so much anxiety with theorists and psychoanalysts. It is unrepresentable, cannot be unlatched, and yet is so captivating that analyst after analyst attempts to unlatch it. The body in bits and pieces, infantile aggression, and the death drive, then, are all fetishes of an unapproachable origin, forever other.

Lacan and Klein similarly argue that the mother is the troubling threshold for the infant on his or her journey to symbolization, that she is unpredictable, both good and bad object, what Lacan will call 'das ting'. Both also argue that the infant is seeking a reality externally to represent an internal reality, and yet it does not occur to either that the good / bad mother, das ting, might just be an external representation of the infant's battle to represent what has been so far unrepresentable in his or her own reality, or at the very least, what is presently unrepresentable.

This threshold the infant faces marks not only the threshold to the visible world, but the infant's attempts to map language onto the body. It marks the creation of narcissism, and accompanying that, Lacan argues, the creation of anxiety and destructive impulses. Contrary to Klein's always already possessed death drive, in Lacan the drives are created through the infant's narcissistic discovery of the ego.

Just as Geryon collected together objects that symbolized some connection to his mother, so psychoanalysis (and here, specifically, Klein) collects fetish objects that signify some originary source of aggression. For Klein it is almost biological, for Lacan the fear of a body in pieces, and for Hassoun the fantasy of the failed weaning.

It is not enough, however, to leave things unexplained, ambivalent. Most need a decisive end or beginning and the unexplained cannot last long. The crucial question, then, is whether the fantasy of origins has a therapeutic function and exists as part of a cure to the analysand and not a counterproductive counter-transference expressing more of the analyst's desire than the analysand's. To explore this question this study must turn to the contrast Leader makes between Klein's and Lacan's emphases on language. This does, however, first lead us to a question of Otherness and necessitates a closer look at Geryon's romance with Herakles.

vii. LISTENING

Sometimes the body experiences a revelation because it has abandoned every other possibility. (53)

Fugitive Pieces

Anne Michaels

When Geryon travels to Argentina, at the age of 22, eight years after falling in love with Geryon and meeting with the inevitable and tragic "you know we'll always be friends" (62), his photographic eye has developed. When he notes, while looking at the carousel, that he "was memorizing / the zebra so he could make / a photograph later" (115), it becomes clear that he is just as aware of photography's manner of "playing with perceptual relationships"(65), but now employs it to his own end of creating a memory. Indeed, photography and memory become interchangeable through Geryon's eyes. Though this means Geryon has taken a more active role in the relationship between subject and object in his photography, this is a system of identification that will be severely challenged in Argentina.

What he is trying to see has been altered as much as his methods of capture. When Geryon meets Ancash and is reunited with Herakles, the extent of this shift becomes clear: "Geryon turned to Ancash as if remembering who he was. *Can I photograph you later?* Geryon said. / Just then a tiny refracted Herakles appeared in the staring glass of the eyeball"(116). Here Geryon tries to capture the image of Ancash just as the refracted image of Herakles enters the picture, linking the two together through the glass eye of the carousel zebra. In the same section, "Ancash watched Herakles. / Geryon watched Ancash"(116) and an architecture of seeing develops. Earlier, in the tango bar, he complained that, "His eyes ached from the effort of trying to see everything without looking at it"(101), and it seems he might be seeing Ancash in order to look indirectly upon Herakles.[52] Geryon's seeing has developed degrees of separation. This separation is even more contradictory to the original pure visual connection, and betrays what must be a callous development for self-protection, even while it sacrifices the proximity to what was desired in the first place – Herakles's gaze.

The love triangle that structures Geryon's mediate seeing is a common motif in Carson's work, and, particularly, was a central preoccupation in her dissertation that was later published as *Eros the Bittersweet*:

> For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components – lover, beloved and that which comes between them. They are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that the two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. (16)

Like first the visual image and then Ancash operates between Geryon and Herakles, and like language for the narrator and her husband in *The Beauty of the Husband*, the third term holds both hope and despair. It is a tenuous connection to the beloved and it is that which will ensure the beloved is always in some manner absent.

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[52] The narrator of *The Beauty of the Husband* suffers an opposite frustration: "she / had seeing scars / on her eyes from trying to look hard enough at every stone of every sidewalk in the city . . .to wring from it / a glimpse of the husband with someone else if such a glimpse was to be had" (73). Each of them is blind to what they need to see and their awry way of seeing is an expression of their affective state.

This mediated way of seeing starts to break down when Ancash discovers Geryon's wings. From the moment of the discovery, a moment of recognition in Ancash, there is something less mediated between the two of them, less trafficking:

> *The word in Quechua is* Yazcol Yazcamac *it means*
> *the Ones Who Went and Saw and Came Back –*
> *I think the anthropologists say* eyewitnesses. *These*
> *people did exist.*
> *Stories are told of them still.*
> *Eyewitnesses*, said Geryon.
> *Yes. People who saw the inside of the volcano.*
> *And came back.*
> *Yes.*
> *How do they come back?*
> *Wings.* (128-9)

Geryon has been denying in himself the very things that could carry him home. This difference between Geryon and Ancash, brought about by Ancash's discovery of Geryon's wings, moves them from envy and the competition for Herakles's desire to a desire for one another. The wings represent a difference that draws them closer and forms a relationship between the two of them that is more identificatory and invested. Through the way Ancash sees him, instead of wanting Herakles' to see him, Geryon can anticipate a new identity.

Oddly enough, this story or myth that Ancash tells directly corresponds to what Herakles's grandmother said of the Lava Man who survived the volcanic eruption in Hades: "*I am a drop of gold he would say / I am molten matter returned from the core of earth to tell you interior things*" (59). This correlation, and Ancash's discovery of Geryon's wings is the measure of a growing intimacy, one in which Geryon can see himself separate from Herakles, the epic tradition, and the story of a "wrong love" (75). From this relationship, from the way Ancash sees him, he can embrace a new mythology, one in which he is agent to his own destiny, As Rae argues, Geryon moves from "heroic conquest to subjective engagement" ("Dazzling Hybrids" 19). This new mythology requires another shift in Geryon's "autobiography." From their first meeting, Geryon learns that Ancash has been recording the sounds of volcano:

> *They do have a language,* Ancash was saying.
> Herakles had explained that he and Ancash were
> traveling around South America
> together recording volcanoes.
> *It's for a movie*, Herakles added. *A nature film? Not*
> *exactly. A documentary*
> *on Emily Dickinson.* (108)

Though the subject matter is particular to Emily Dickinson and meant to speak to one of her poems, "On My Volcano Grows the Grass," what is most distinct is first that Geryon, upon listening, notices that, "The sound was hot as a color inside" (108). The combination of the sounds and Herakles's eyes on him disturbs him, makes it so he must leave the café.

This is not the first time that Geryon has confused his senses. This connection between volcano noises and colors connected back to Geryon's earlier travels in Argentina, when he had recalled a science fair project he had done when he was a child: "It was the year he began to wonder about the noise that colors make. Roses came / roaring across the garden at him. / He lay on his bed at night listening to the silver light of stars crashing against / the window screen" (84). But this is Geryon's world, and either the rest of the world cannot hear the colours or Geryon's senses are confused: "Most / of those he interviewed for the science project had to admit they did not hear / the cries of roses / being burned alive in the noonday sun. *Like horses,* Geryon would say helpfully, / *like horses in war.* No, they shook their heads" (84). Geryon's ability to hear colours seems particularly relevant to the colour red, the one he feels ridiculed for (83) and looks for information on (92). From childhood on, then, Geryon has felt a connection to colours and particularly red, though his photography seems to have little to do with colour.

In *Autobiography* colours make sounds and photographs can be taken of noise and it all is symptomatic of Geryon's troubled senses. In *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson discusses this as related to the larger condition of eros:

> The moment when the soul parts on itself in desire is conceived as a dilemma of body and senses. On Sappho's tongue, as we have seen, it is a moment bitter and sweet . . . Later poets mix the sensations of hot and cold with the metaphor from taste to concoct "sweet fire" . . . But no simple map of the emotions is available here. Desire is not simple . . . Boundaries of body, categories of thought, are confounded. (7-8)

What defines this confusion of the senses, according to Carson, is the lover's ambivalence, where "[t]he shape of love and hate is perceptible, then, in a variety of sensational crises" (8). This too is the melancholic's ambivalence, and the perceptual disturbances already seen in *The Substance of Forgetting* and *Blown Figures* are akin to Geryon's hearing and gauging the temperature of colours.

In Geryon's case, colour has an even greater significance because of his own peculiar tint. His redness and his wings are inseparable and one signifies the other's difference when it's not present. When one is not marginalizing him, the other will. In the section, "Distances," Geryon hears the yellowbeard tell of babies born with tails and how doctors cut them off so it won't scare the parents, and Geryon remarks, "*I wonder what percentage are / born with wings*" (97). Shortly afterwards, Geryon remarks, "I am a philosopher of sandwiches . . . Things good on the inside" (97), so that what is a harmless observation about sandwiches betrays a conflict in Geryon between how he sees himself inside and outside.[53]

After these conversations that presuppose a normal and unfrightening body, Geryon goes home and takes a black and white photo of himself, doing away with the redness: "It is a black-and-white photograph showing a naked young man in fetal position. / He has entitled it "No Tail!" /The fantastic fingerwork of his wings is outspread on the bed like a black lace / map of South America" (97). The photograph allows him to deny his redness, proclaim his lack of a tail and yet he chooses to display his wings, something he will not do in any other location, with any other person.[54] It is a site of an affirmation, but a mixed one. The title proclaims normality while the image displays difference.

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[53] Wings are a recurring fascination of Carson's: in "Epitaph : Annunciation" the narrator wonders "Pray what / Shall I do with my six hundred wings?" (*Men* 14); in "TV Men", Akmatova describes Antigone and says she "had tossed her wing over one arm" (*Men* 102); In "Freud (2nd Draft)", the narrator notes that the raptor's "[b]ody does not move, has only one wing. / All guests of the Center are maimed" (*Men* 128); and in "Anthropology of Water," the swimmer "awakens suddenly feeling like the wrong side of a wing flipped up in the wind" (*Plainwater* 256). Wings always seem connected to what Carson argues in *Eros the Bittersweet*: "Wings make the difference between a mortal and an immortal story of love . . . the presence or absence of wings in a lover's story determines his erotic strategy" (159).

The absence of red in the photograph stands as a reminder of what remains repressed. He can proclaim his wings, but not the redness too. The next night, he goes to a tango bar where he thinks he hears a psychoanalytic tango singer ask, "*Who can a monster blame for being red?*" (104). It is a question that still plagues him. All signs tell him he cannot deny the colour of his skin, and even the book he reads, *Philosophic Problems*, tells him, "To deny the existence of red / is to deny the existence of mystery. The soul which does so will one day go mad" (105). From the first science project about the sounds of colours to the question of perception in the philosophy textbook, his relationship to the colour red concerns him, as the mark of his difference, and the possibility of a limit to his sanity – it represents the repressed in him. So long as he represses his own redness, he will confuse his senses, hear colour instead of being able to see it. His sense of presence is muddled and he cannot yet hear what he needs to hear.

Though it seems, through Ancash's discovery and Geryon's own musings, that his own redness might return, the black-and-white photograph foreshadows the coming darkness:

> The smell of the leather jacket near
> his face and the hard pressure of Herakles'
> arm under the leather sent a wave of longing as strong

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[54] Wahl asks oddly, "[A]re the wings really there?" (182). She feels that "Geryon could have done everything he does here (except fly, once), without them" (183). What Wahl cannot see is that the inactivity of Geryon's wings and the one time he uses them are what is most significant about him. She is more concerned with the "realism" of the wings, in an odd and literalizing transference with the text.

> as a color through Geryon.
> It exploded at the bottom of his belly.
> Then the blanket shifted. He felt Herakles' hand move
> on his thigh and Geryon's
> head went back like a poppy in a breeze
> as Herakles' mouth came down on his and blackness
> sank through him. (118-9)

The wave of longing brings Geryon back to the strength of colours, but the actual kiss brings blackness, and at the very least the erasure of red once more. The key to this moment his how "Geryon's / head went back like a poppy in a breeze." While in this moment his head falls back in pleasure, the gesture is strikingly similar to the moment in the myth when Herakles killed Geryon: "The boy neck lean At an odd slow angle sideways as when a / Poppy shames itself in a whip of Nude breeze" (13). Geryon has slipped back into the epic tale, stepped into the past, embraced Herakles once more, but based on an old "wrong love," and each of them notes, in the hotel room later, that it is "*just like the old days*" (141) in the most painful and damaging ways.

The kiss that brings blackness leads to the landscape of Lima, where Geryon sees, "The sky heavy and dark as if before rain but it hasn't rained in Lima since 1940" (120). In a turn akin to pathetic fallacy, the distinction between self and other forms as Geryon leads himself to a crisis where he empties the world around him of colour in a subliminal attempt to deny his own red skin. The first morning in Lima is described as "soiled white" (120), and then "Saturday went whitely on" (125) "Sounds came to them across the white air" (121) and there are the "dull red winter stars of Lima" (121). The lack of colour here is a photograph losing its resolution, and is inseparable from how Geryon perceives the landscape as in wait, as desiring: "*Everyone seems to be waiting*, said Geryon. *Waiting for what?* Said Ancash. / *Yes waiting for what*, said Geryon" (122). This waiting is intimately connected to all the questions running through Geryon's mind; it seems Lima is the neurotic existentialist's home away from home. Since the kiss on the airplane, which sent him into darkness again, colour – as a synecdoche for his own heterogeneous skin colour and his own desire and identity separate from Herakles – has slowly seeped out of the world around him. He thinks to himself, "Lima is terrible, he thought, why am I here? Overhead / the sky waited too" (124). He does not know why he is in Lima and cannot perceive what it is he is waiting for, though it is such a monstrous waiting that the whole landscape, city and country, seems to feel it too. As he seems to ask, "What is on the other side of that kiss?" the apparent answer is his own slow erasure.

The paradox here is that the kiss that brings the blackness is brought by Herakles, who in the bleak landscape of Geryon's waiting – also known as Lima – is one of the only sources of colour:

> Big chunk of papaya in his hand which he waved at
>   Geryon.
> *You should try this stuff Geryon! It's like eating the sun!*
>   Herakles sank his mouth
> into the fruit and grinned at them.
> Juice ran down his face and onto his bare chest. Geryon
>   watched a drop of sun
> slide past Herakles' nipple and over his belly

> and vanish into the top of his jeans. He moved his eyes
> away. (122)

Little unpacking is required to see what it means that Herakles is the eater of the sun. When the drop of sun runs down his body and vanishes into the top of his jeans, this vibrant colour explains the landscape of white and the blanching of Geryon – can there be any doubt what he is waiting for?[55]

Yet colour begins to appear elsewhere, free of the sun eater Herakles. As already discussed, Geryon's own colour begins to return in the "autobiography" when Ancash discovers Geryon's wings and describes to him the Yazcamac, the "*People who saw the inside of the volcano . . . the Yazcamac return as red people with wings, / all their weaknesses burned away -- / and their mortality*" (129). I noted, in that discussion, how this marks a shift in Geryon's relationship with Ancash, how Geryon no longer simply looks through Ancash at Herakles, at Herakles' desire. This moment, though is even more complicated, as it also creates colour on an otherwise colourless landscape: "The Pacific at night is red / and gives off a soot of desire"(130). Geryon's waiting seems disrupted, and colour returns through Ancash's gaze. Though Ancash could just be the next in a serial of Others (Mother / Herakles / Ancash) there is a subtle difference here, as will be discussed later in this chapter, when Geryon discovers through Ancash what his own desire is. On the rooftop, looking out over the red Pacific and the "soot of desire," Geryon is still predominantly confused, in a landscape of question marks that threatens to blanch all the red out.

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[55] In her poem "TV Men: Lazarus," Carson imagines Lazarus with a similar nipple fetish: "Our sequence begins and ends with that moment of complete / innocence / and sport -- / when Lazarus licks the first drop of afterlife off the nipple / of his own death" (*Men* 91). Tenuously, though mythically, it seems Geryon's desire for Herakles might be an attraction to his own death.

Part and parcel of this confusion of the past with the present is the journey they all go on to see the volcano. Certainly they choose to go on this journey, but it could also be seen as the inevitable result of this conflict in Geryon's life between who he was and who he is becoming. Moreover, it seems that when Herakles enters the picture, both in the past and the present, a volcano dutifully presents itself. It would seem that in the relationship between Geryon and Herakles the volcano comes to represent the untenable nature of his "inner" world, and all that he fearfully represses and keeps secret from Herakles. In this instance, the journey in Argentina, Geryon's old modes of knowing himself slip away. Where the camera had previously been a way for him to mediate a space between himself and the world, the journey to the volcano disrupts that relationship:

> Geryon kept
> the camera in his hand and spoke little. I am
> disappearing, he thought
> but the photographs were worth it.
> A volcano is not a mountain like others. Raising a
> camera to one's face has effects
> no one can calculate in advance. (135)

Concurrent with their trip to the volcano is the development of the affair with Herakles, and the complications it is bringing between him and Ancash. The increasing complications are inseparable from the volcano rising in front of the camera lens and threatening to make Geryon disappear. The volcano represents all that Geryon must face and is resisting, while the camera will not, can no longer mediate – any attempts to maintain that degree of separation means his own disappearance. His old subject and object confusion, initially pointed out to him by Herakles' grandmother, returns with a vengeance.

When he leaves the room where he has been having sex with Herakles, he finds the "corridor deserted / except for a red EXIT sign at the end" (142) and this redness is metonymic for the volcano and his own redness, what he must embrace in order to move towards his own subjectivity. Through the door under the EXIT sign he finds the hotel garden, with "Ruined roses of every variety paused stiffly on their stalks. . . and then he saw Ancash" (142). The garden and Ancash on the other side of the "red EXIT sign" are parts of his path back to himself. It is when Ancash confronts Geryon about this return to the past that the effect of the "blackness" becomes evident. The section is titled "XLV. Photographs: Like and Not Like," and the "Like and Not Like" of the title refers to the similarities and differences between Ancash and Geryon, while it also refers to Geryon's recognition, there in the garden, that it is not just like the old days with Herakles. Ancash's question and Geryon's own answer make that clear: "*So what's it like* – Ancash stopped. He began again. *So what's it like fucking him now? / Degrading*, said Geryon / without a pause and saw Ancash recoil from the word" (144). Geryon does not mean to hurt Ancash here, but they are caught in an odd architecture of desire and identification. Geryon's recognition and refusal of his own "wrong" desires in turn wrongs Ancash's desire and affection for Herakles.

Not until Geryon stands face to face with Ancash in the garden, not until he faces the peculiar "Like and Not Like" mirror, can he face the effect of the blackness upon himself. The red in the "Autobiography of Red," the very red of his skin, cannot be denied the way he has been denying it with Herakles. The end point of this degradation is the mythic ending that Geryon must learn to resist more than he could when he was a kid in elementary school, where it seemed so simple that, "*Herakles came one / day killed Geryon got the cattle*" (37). If Geryon is to resist the mythic, resist the ending prescribed to him by mythology, then he must find a place for the colour red in a new mythology.

This counter-narrative is discovered through his friendship with Ancash and Ancash's parting request: "*There is one thing I want from you. / Tell me / Want to see you use those wings*"(144). In part, Ancash's relationship with Herakles is also degraded so long as Geryon cannot let go of that past relationship with Herakles. Ostensibly, it is Ancash's request for Geryon to release them from the love triangle, and to break the painful identification between him and Ancash. On another level this refers back to what Ancash said about the Yazcamac, who were able to return from inside the volcano because they had wings. As Ancash had said, "*Yazcamac return as red people with wings, / all their weaknesses burned away -- / and their mortality*" (129). Ancash is asking Geryon to return from inside the volcano, recognize himself, the colour red, wings and all, and in the process release himself from Herakles. Once he can do that, he can be released from his mortal and epic destiny to be killed by Herakles. Once he does that he can become immortal through his own mythology.

The key to using his wings is most obviously a measured move away from the visual and the passive towards the physical and the active, but on a more subtle level it is an engagement with the register of sounds, something perhaps disregarded ever since Geryon's childhood connection to his mother's voice. It is the gift that Ancash has given him and that he returns to in the penultimate section, entitled "XLVI. Photographs: # 1748," where the first line claims, "It is a photograph he never took, no one here took it"

(145), and in the description that follows, nothing of it seems like a photograph – it is the most unphotographic of the photographs:

> *This is for Ancash*, he calls to the earth diminishing
> below. This is a memory of our
> beauty. He peers down
> at the earth heart of Icchantikas dumping all its photons out
> her ancient eye and he
> smiles for
> the camera: "The Only Secret People Keep." (145)

The volcano becomes the photographic eye, for it is it that sees him, has always seen him for what he is. The narrator of "The Anthropology of Water" meets a man who asks a question relevant to this moment in Geryon's life: "How can you see your life unless you leave it?" (122). For Geryon, flight is his necessary departure.

The secret is never revealed, but it has something to do with Ancash, Geryon, and the memory of their beauty, the beauty of two men who love and desire another who does not love or desire them back the same way. It is telling that he is not smiling into a camera, but into the "ancient eye" of the volcano. His gift to Ancash is on the tape recorder, a record of the volcano's language and of Geryon flying over the volcano, but perhaps that is the same thing. Jennings argues that there is a larger trope of estrangement in Carson's work, and this resembles Geryon's journey:

> Carson connects this kind of alienation of self (alien as xenos) to travel narratives as a shared 'compulsion to find that quality, that structuralists

> call estrangement, which is a way of getting slightly outside the membrane of your own normal life so you can look back at it.' (933)

Geryon, flying over the volcano, leaves triangular structures behind and uses his wings to rupture the membrane of his own (ab)normal life, not so he can look back, but so that he can listen to himself for once. Oddly, or suitably enough, Carson says in Rehak's article, "jump from what you know into empty space and see where you end up. I think you only learn things when you jump" (39). Better yet, Geryon would say, if you can jump and then fly.

The scopic world of Geryon's photographic "autobiography" was a mediated and vicarious place for Geryon to approach the world through degrees of separation at the same time that it was inspired by and resonated back to the original moment of meeting Herakles as he stepped off the bus, the moment that was "the opposite of blindness" (39). His confusion between subject and object – both initially declared by Herakles' grandmother and later evidenced by his disappearing as he took photos of the volcano – are conclusive evidence that try as he might, Geryon could not successfully maintain the skin of the soul, that "miracle of mutual pressures" (60), when it came to pressures like his longing and affection for Herakles.

To survive his perverse desire for Herakles' desire, he had to forego this scopic world, and return to the epigraph that opens his story: "Can human nature not survive / Without a listener?" The return to listening, the ability to go back to a presence in which he can differentiate the senses heralds a partial return to his first compositions where he tried to hold onto his mother's voice. Sounds are closer to an authentic presence for him, and as he flies over the volcano, embracing his own immortality, he makes an audio tape of the experience. He finds a subjectivity he could only find in the volcano's "ancient eye," in the rupture between inside and outside.

viii. CHANGING DIRECTIONS

> Depression, like passion, involves the creation of meaning. (xi)
>
> Introduction to *Cruelty of Depression*
>
> Michael Vincent Miller

In the "Autobiography" proper of *Autobiography of Red* the resistance is in the realm of language primarily, but with Hassoun's case study of Janus it is more explicitly in narrative. The "style" of Janus's existence defines this narrative through its attention to an addressee, its attempt to seduce or anticipate the other. From the first phone call to the traumatized memory of his youth, Janus's style poses a transferential question and Hassoun, almost unwittingly, attempts to answer it.

Though the reader can, and Hassoun does, anticipate this as a part of the transference, it is here, in the case of Janus, also dynamically a part of his addiction:

> What might this negative despotism be? What inner tyrant is this to whom the subject submits first with delights, then with horror, and finally with glum indifference? What tyrant but that of an absence erected into a being, one which rules the subject's entire existence? For this reason we can venture the hypothesis that the drug takes the place of an enigmatic absence that continually, compulsively manifests itself. (12)

If style is the man to whom one addresses oneself, then for Janus, absence is his style. Absence is resurrected into a being, an Other, whom the subject desires and in some turn of passion will eventually submit to.

It is an absence that cannot be replaced easily, though things can stand in for it temporarily, like Janus' drugs stand in. Stand in, but not replace:

> The drug comes, as it were, in the nick of time to attempt, paradoxically, to release the subject from the enigma of an absence, by endowing that absence with the solidity of an object (the drug), which the subject will then erect into a being of absence . . . From this point on, before presenting himself as waste product – as wreckage, rubbish, scrap – the drug user elevates the status of waste itself, making it seem the only conceivable cause of his desire. (12)

Later, Hassoun adds, "This is why I'm suggesting that it is not death the addicted subject aspires to, but rot, trash, the remainder in the Lacanian sense of the term" (13). Yet Hassoun seems to miss the other face of his Janus here. Certainly Janus aspires to trash, but what is interesting in terms of his addiction is, as he points out, that "A person in a state of addiction is not shit, but takes shit – so called – to feel first like a king, and then ultimately to merge totally with what he puts into his body: at some moment in this process, he's made of shit and considers himself as such" (12). Hassoun privileges the desire to become shit and the end state of identifying as shit, but does not see the *mise-en-scene* here, the drama of king to shit that he himself outlines. The drug experience, for Janus, is not just about aspiring to shit, it's about aspiring to King, then falling to shit – this is high drama, though only one half of fortune's wheel.

In essence, then, Hassoun privileges the object, the desired destination in the mise-en-scene of user desire here. So when he refers to how the incident from Janus' childhood "gave his existence a style, keeping him from another lapse into heroin: he needed to go on living his damaged existence in the hope of finding out the real story" (11), style refers to a play of signification. The memory is not the opposite of heroin. It is just one more term in a sequence that attempts to stand in for absence. So it follows that the memory is itself an other, something to which Janus addresses himself, and that "style" is not just a certain signification, but like the look, a perverse way in which Janus subjects himself to the drive of the other.

Each term that attempts to stand in for this absence, however, ultimately fails or only temporarily succeeds. The pervert's courting of the Other's jouissance inevitably brings him into a direct confrontation with the Real. For Lacan and Hassoun, the pervert's disavowal ties them irrevocably with *das Ding*, or the *Thing*:

> Whence the need to summon this remained into being in the only register still available: the Real. Everything happened as though the operation taking place at the mirror stage had miscarried on the level of one of the avatars of the object. We might translate this failure by saying that the murder of the Thing [das Ding] has not been fully carried out. (13)

The failed mourning at the moment of weaning, the inability of the mother to relinquish the breast and / or the inability of the father to separate the infant and mother meaningfully, means that "the murder of the Thing" has not been carried out.

The murder of the Thing here, is precisely the proper creation of the symbolic, something the infant cannot carry out unless parented by some third term which instigates the Law, forces both mother and infant to lose the breast and mourn that loss. It is, then, the creation of a proper regulatory function between the "inside" and "outside" that Geryon attempts to control through his "autobiography," but never entirely succeeds:

> Thus, for the speaking being, there must exist an active authority that tries to fend off anything, from either the outer or the inner world, that would create too much tension. It is only "highlights" of subjectivized reality that human beings come into contact with. Moreover, the Thing will be from the outset that which is isolated, external. It is what is "radically foreign," unassimilable. Foreign, alien (Lacan designates it as an absence, if not a hole), this Thing will be able to function for the subject as a reference. It will be the primordial object, lost forever, yet in a certain sense never entirely lost, since it is always something to re-find. (13-14)

Absence is the Thing, and it is the breast that was lost but never mourned and the absence of the Law that would have facilitated the mourning in the first place. As "radically foreign" as it is, this Thing is the enemy of Geryon's autobiography from the first.

The Thing is what he cannot symbolize or banish from symbolization by making it radically external. Indeed, the paradox with Geryon is that the Thing is both internal and external, just radically other. This all culminates in the imagery of volcanoes that Geryon is so attracted to. For Geryon the Thing is both internal and external, something he is trying to prevent from transgressing either way, and what makes him most fearful is that "thin skin of the soul" (60), "a miracle of mutual pressures" (60).

Yet, fear here of course is just another face for desire. Janus's attempts to avoid his addiction and Geryon's attempts to regulate inside and outside through his "autobiography" all camouflage a desire for that transgression, for the volcano to erupt, for the inner world to subsume the outer world or the outer world to abolish the inner one

– the tension is unrelenting and they secretly desire release. At the core this is the question of what makes these two men return compulsively to their own destruction.

The desire for the other's desire, what has already been discussed as the pervert assuming the object position of the other's jouissance, is—like Geryon's fear of the transgression of inside / outside—camouflage. As Fink argues, the pervert's loyalty and offering of self is more than what it seems:

> Though it may appear that the masochist devotes himself to giving his partner jouissance (the partner standing in for the Other here) while asking for nothing in return . . . Lacan suggests that that is but a cover: the masochist's fantasy dissimulates the true aim of his actions. As we have seen several times, fantasy is essentially a lure that conceals the subject's mainspring, masking what truly makes the subject "tick." While the masochist would like to believe and to make us believe that he "aims to give the Other Jouissance," in fact he "aims to make the Other anxious" (Seminar X, March 13, 1963). Why does he do so? (186-7)

This camouflaged desire to bring about anxiety in the other, to displace it from the self to the other, is the drama Hassoun notes at the beginning of his case study on Janus, when Janus calls him, anxious, demanding to see him, and caught in some "yet unfathomable drama" (9). In the early stages, all that is apparent to Hassoun is that there is a drama unfolding in which he plays a part, so he unwittingly refuses to play the part he thinks Janus wants him to play, and tells him to call back tomorrow.

The anxiety Janus displayed, the drama he intended to draw Hassoun into, is the play to instill anxiety in the other, which, as Lacan suggests, is the masochist's desire. As Fink points out,

> Like the fetishist, the masochist is in need of separation, and his solution is to orchestrate a scenario whereby it is his partner, acting as Other, who lays down the law – the law that requires him to give up a certain jouissance . . . Often a partner must be pushed to the breaking point, to a point of intense anxiety, before he explosively expresses his will in the form of commands ("Stop!" for example). (187)

If Hassoun had refused to see Janus, he would have laid down the law, while if he had agreed to see him, he would have presented himself as incapable of bringing about the law. Hassoun sees this in the fact that

> [a]ll past attempts to commit himself to an analysis had broken off quite abruptly. This time he was determined to stick with it – and the only reason for that was apparently that my immediate request that he 'call back tomorrow' established a distance that had, unwittingly on my part, struck just the right note. (10)

This right note depends upon Hassoun's position as subject presumed to know, in some sense, and the waiting he instills prolongs his ability to stand in for the Thing, the Other.

Hassoun could have refused to see Janus, or he could have relented and agreed to see him presently, but he chose to put off the appointment, in order "to introduce the time-signifier ("till tomorrow"), which could only lead him to relativize his devouring wait" (22), he later admits. More accurately, what Hassoun's participation in Janus's drama brings about is the possibility of meaning formation, and, "In ceasing to represent an existential project, this waiting necessarily became an element in the very rhythm of the analysis" (22). The possibility of meaning formation is nothing more than the creation of desire in the analytic relationship, and the shifting of the analysand's relationship with his or her symptoms.

This shifting is not an easy task, as Fink argues, for "At some level, the individual enjoys his or her symptoms. Indeed, generally speaking, this is the only way the individual knows how to obtain enjoyment" (3). Between subject and world, then, the subject's symptoms play a third party, a pleasurable witness to the trials of the subject's otherwise failed attempts to come into being.

The shift the analyst seeks is to rework the failed mourning that occurred somewhere in the analysand's development. The symptoms, the subject's manner of being – and in the case of Janus, the drug addiction, and his own sense of the mystery of his development – stand in, providing meaning to the subject's existence, and yet preventing the development, the introduction to the symbolic order, they require. The analyst must work to have the analysand recognize "the object the analysand has had to set up in place of what would have allowed him to represent his melancholy prostration. The knowledge constituted in the transference tends to allow the subject to mourn, and from this mourning reconstitute the (previously ever-absent) internal object that should have been his support" (23). With Janus, Hassoun recognized that the first step in doing this was to interrupt the "unfathomable drama," to interrupt the transference as it was already constituting itself, and introduce the terminable wait:

> An analysand, in other words, should be able to measure the time that separates one session from another, sense the analyst's own subjection to this session time and rhythm, include this in the framework of existence, and be able to understand the universality of the Law, construct the object that is able to give back shape and form to an absent image, reintroducing it into the course of his history, and begin at last to think about this passion whose object is an endless wait: this passion the drug rouses. (23)

The introduction of time and the terminable wait into the sessions shows the analysand that both he or she and the analyst are subject to the same law, the law of time.

Hassoun's demand 'to call back' provides Janus's anxiety with a structure to fixate on: time. Where Janus sought Hassoun's anxiety, it was instead returned to him. What has been interrupted is the subject's drama with the Other, with the Thing – his symptoms, his affliction. This anxiety is the window of opportunity for the analyst, where the analysand is seeking new objects of satisfaction, yet momentarily there is a third term in the relationship between subject and object: "To shift waiting into the framework of the melancholic's treatment may represent their first moment of having access to desire. It's a matter, then, of immediately grasping the anxiety signal in order to help the analysand pull away from the tyranny of an unlost object" (76). Hassoun's interruption cheated Janus of the law he was expecting, but through the access to desire in the wait, he has opened the possibility of a genuine connection to the symbolic.

The anxiety Janus has instilled in others, the memory, the addiction, are all parts of a series which have simultaneously held out the possibility of connecting with the symbolic and with the law, but been inadequate to provide it. This is partly, as Fink points out, because these objects in the drama are all in relation to the Thing, not the symbolic:

> It is what is "radically foreign," unassimilable. Foreign, alien (Lacan designates it as an absence, if not a hole), this Thing will be able to function for the subject as a reference. It will be the primordial object, lost forever, yet in a certain sense never entirely lost, since it is always something to re-find. As such, it could be considered a reference enabling the subject to gauge what is incomparable in his desire. Now, the pleasure principle that governs the quest for this object always keeps it at a distance. The objects of satisfaction, the objects of the drive are not the Thing, but rather decoys, placeholders. (13-14)

As already discussed in chapter two, with *Blown Figures*, the Thing's domain is the real. What signifies as a referent for what prevented access to the symbolic is that which could never be brought into the symbolic – therein lies the paradox. It is an abject force "never entirely lost" and only ever found in "decoys, placeholders" which by their very nature as objects of satisfaction, will not entirely satisfy – the drama is both impossible and yet comforting as it returns and returns to the primordial object, the moment of loss, always anticipating a grief that never occurred.

These decoys, these placeholders, though they seduce with the possibility of entré to the symbolic, are imaginary relations. As such, they have a short shelf life, either fail or must be shored up over time. As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out,

> As a narcissistic structure, Imaginary relations – be they between individuals or societies – are governed by jealousy, competition and

> aggressivity, mediated through idealization, love and the rationalizations which Lacan calls misrecognition. Although consensus between people seems to offer a guarantee of certainty and stability, Imaginary collusions continually break down. (Wright 174)

Had Hassoun given into Janus's drama or rejected it outright, he would have temporarily shored up Janus's need for the law. But the deferral, the placement of time in the analytic relation, forestalled the breakdown and introduced the possibility of interrupting the destination of the drama.

In relation to Janus and the anxiety he displayed, Hassoun argues that anxiety signifies a key moment in the analysis.

> It is obvious that the analyst is called upon to be shifted, or more precisely, to shift the destination site of the analysand's speech. This is the minimal, necessary condition for introducing into the failing, or falling short of [faute de] that afflicts the melancholic analysand, a possible area for play and dialecticization, in other words, of loss. For the melancholic is tormented not by a loss, but by the lack of possibility for naming and designating this loss. (29)

If style is the one whom you address yourself to, then the object for the analyst is to shift "the destination site of the analysand's speech" and alter his or her style.

Essentially, the plot of the drama, the plot that is played out time and time again, ad infinitum, must be altered. Altered implies only that the path just changes direction, and yet this rewriting, this change in style is dialectical. As the destination site alters, so must the origins. Implicit in Janus's style change must be a rewriting of his past, the story he holds onto as a security blanket, the story that is built to not be answered but to instead signify the impossible possibility of figuring out himself. A life lived like a question mark will always be nothing but a question.

Through and through this question of otherness and Hassoun's attempts to change the destination site are attempts to bring the subject, Janus, into being, to make him a subject not so encumbered by the past and the future, but more defined by the moment. The latches of being the unnamed classicist theorizes in the proemium of *Autobiography of Red* have a corresponding dynamic to this attempt to alter the destination site, where each is trying to undo a dominant narrative – in *Autobiography of Red*, the mythic tale of Geryon and Herakles, while in the case of Janus, his own incapacitating history and addiction – and create space for other subject possibilities. As this study moves to the last section of this chapter, the same principle carries it forward.

ix. LATCHES, FOOTNOTES, AND SIGNIFICATION

In describing the sixth chapter of his *Freud's Footnotes*, Darian Leader justifies that chapter's juxtaposition of Klein's theory of infantile depression and Lacan's mirror stage by arguing that, "Klein and Lacan were responding to Freudian problems, yet proposing very different solutions. Lacan's theory of the mirror phase shadows Klein's notion of a depressive position, and we try to show the way in which they were both engaging with similar clinical questions" (8). While Hassoun assumes a cure involves an altering of the direction of the analysand's address, the same question can be seen in a different guise in Leader's contrast of Klein and Lacan's approaches to language. As Leader points out, the basic distinction is one of meaning, wherein, "The barrage of meaning in Klein contrasts with the elusive meaning in Lacan" (211). Yet, this is a little misleading, for Klein's apparent "barrage" makes meaning as elusive as Lacan's style does. It is Klein's style that must first be considered, for it defines her as a fetish object, as a frame through which Leader approaches Lacan.

Stylistically, Klein's barrage is, in her mind, an attempt to make words mean, to signify. Leader, however, sees a contradiction in Klein's theorizing, where she realizes in the distinction between symbolic equations and symbolism, that symbolic equations cause anxiety in the analysand, but stylistically,

> The problem is that so often in her formulations, each term equals another term so that everything means something. The breast, excrement, and other internal objects seem forever equated, rather than symbolizing each

> other, or indeed, something else. One might argue that this is in fact the appropriate way of formulating the infant's early experience of reality, but the identification of terms does seem nonetheless to be a feature of Klein's theoretical style. (211)

Klein creates an interpretive world for her infant analysands in which everything means something else and it is important to dwell on how different this is from a world in which an object's meaning is distinct from another object's meaning. As Leader points out, this might be congruent with how an infant discovers language, but this still must raise the question of whether the infant analysand is frightened by the signifying possibilities into holding on to one object – a language bandage, while in the process she has asserted the terrifying possibilities of the signifier.

The result is that Klein's literalizing and forceful analysis (that train is your father's penis) pushes the signifying possibilities too far (the strong assertion that a toy train is the father's penis makes it possible, even likely, that the father's penis could be any object). Furthermore, I would argue, this emphatic supplanting seems to not only make it possible that other signifiers might stand in, it makes it possible that meaning is always in excess of the signifier – the symbolic world is failing in Klein's hands.

This process of creating a chain where everything means something else is what Klein herself called a symbolic equation. As Leader points out, "Klein held that the process of symbolic equation is crucial for the working through of the depressive position, as it allows deflection and distribution of anxiety" (219). Reading back to Geryon in *Autobiography of Red* and his fear of words emptying out and filling up with something different, it seems this attention to a signifying equation is more of an aspect of the melancholic position than a working through. Potentially, at its worst, it would be more likely to induce anxiety than to disperse it.

Leader refers to an often-referenced case study of Klein's, "A Contribution to the Theory of Intellectual Inhibition," wherein a seven-year-old boy has difficulty distinguishing between certain words. Leader notes that "The clinical sequence leaves little doubt that, whatever one makes of Klein's interpretations, something important has happened within the space of these sessions" (222). Looking closely at the boy's language difficulty, he notices a certain logic prevails, even if it is only the logic of the symptom:

> If he could always avoid, for example, 'chicken' as the reference to poulet in such a limited set of combinations, his so-called inhibition is most artful. To be able to do this, he must be aware, at a certain level, of the relation between these words, but he is presenting to Klein his inability as a symptom, as a message to be deciphered. When he has finally overcome his symptom and can match the words 'correctly', there is thus the question of what has changed. Certainly not the ability to match the words. (222)

For Klein, the answer to the question of what work has been done lies within the symbolic equation, but Leader sees this as only a step in the machinations of what has happened in the case work:

> If 'fish' is linked to mother, he is constructing a chain of words to distance an aspect of the mother, and hence the appeal to the vehicles of the boat and the seaplane. But for an escape to really operate, something has to

> happen at the level of the strata of symbols: in other words, one symbol has to take the place of another. This indicates that for a repression to work, it is not just a question of finding a term to 'symbolize' the mother (for example, 'fish'), but of finding a further term to go into the latter's place ('crab' takes the place of 'fish'). (223)

This sense of the strata, of the ability for one term to symbolize another and take its place is, according to Leader, the work that goes on behind the work that Klein thinks she is doing. In order for the depressive position to be worked through, there must be an actual symbolization that occurs, something to symbolize the mother in the acquisition of language. Symbolic equation, though it can temporarily create distance, has the ambiguous effect of also dispersing the mother's symbolic power. At its worst, then, symbolic equations in the analytical process can make the mother tyrannically everywhere, or potentially, can introduce the subject to the symbolic, perhaps a choice dependant upon whether or not the infant is predisposed to deal with symbolic equations a certain way. Central to this question, then, is has weaning already failed, or, at what stage in his or her development is the infant?

It is not enough to say that one must create symbolization in the analytic relationship to work through depression, though, for the question that remains is how did Klein symbolize when her intent was to create symbolic equations. Leader points out that,

> The problem here is in the assumption that each term has to symbolize some other element in a process of equation, whereas the notion of strata of elements would make more sense of the material, particularly if we

> introduce considerations of the father's function at the symbolic level. Something has to happen to transform equations, in which one term equals another term, into symbolism, in which one term banishes, or represses, another term. (225)

Leader defines the difference between symbolic equation and symbolism as related to strata – one meaning must repress another. There must be a third element in the relationship between signifier and signified and between objects that form equations. It is the father function at the level of the symbolic which allows one term to replace another.

In Klein's analytic world, the world of the session, the tyrannical mother stands front and centre and the father function at the level of the symbolic has little function. As already argued here, Klein's style runs the continual risk of not deferring anxiety, but increasing it by making the mother's symbolic power polymorphous, capable of symbolizing almost any other thing (the crab, the fish). Yet, what she and Leader overlook is her own gender, and the implications it carries in dealing with infantile analysands. As Leader notes, "In the world of infancy described by Klein, the notion of the law and of prohibition are more or less absent. They do not even appear as footnotes"(225). What is the effect on a child of a woman, authoritative at that, articulating the lines of symbolization? Indeed, Leader does not factor in the terrifying power of Klein as woman, as gender related to the mother. In a social context, then, Klein either stands in for the terrible mother, or makes the infant's terrible mother seem not so terrible after all. Is this the law of the father, or the law of the other, perhaps described differently as the law of "I guess it could be worse?"

The abundance of symbolic equations in her work, in some sense, is a reverse fetish: it represents at every turn the castration of the father who cannot symbolically step in and halt the symbolic equation. Yet, concurrently, by standing as a fetish for the father's power, by embracing a discourse that begs to be halted, banished or repressed, Klein's analytic discourse leaves little recourse, little alternative but to desire the father's symbolic power. Fink argues that, in this drama that insists on anxiety, there is the perverse desire for the law to be brought into being:

> Whereas we see an utter and complete absence of the law in psychosis, and a definitive instatement of the law in neurosis (overcome only in fantasy), in perversion the subject struggles to bring the law into being – in a word, to make the Other exist. (165)

What is peculiar about this desire for the law, though, is that – as in Janus's case – it is usually the analysand that is trying, in classic transference, to provoke the analyst's anxiety and bring about the law:

> One of the paradoxical claims Lacan makes about perversion is that while it may sometimes present itself as a no-holds-barred, jouissance-seeking activity, its less apparent aim is to bring the law into being: to make the Other as law (or law-giving Other) exist. The masochist's goal, for example, is to bring the partner or witness to the point of enunciating a law and perhaps pronouncing a sentence (often by generating anxiety in the partner). (180)

In Klein's case, though, the law comes about in the analysand as Other. Perhaps unwittingly, Klein's analytic style drives the child towards the paternal signifier, even if he must become that signifier, take it as part of his own psychic makeup, in a narcissistic turn, and abandoning (yet becoming free from) the mother's jouissance in the process.

How fitting it is, then, too, that it is this desire for the father's phallic symbolic power that Leader uses to link to Lacan's mirror stage. The question mirrors itself, asks if Lacan's perennial claim to not be the one who knows, the absence of analysands, is just another face of this failure of the law of the father to work. As a theoretical turn, as a way in which a theorist questions analysts, it proved very productive, but it was also a practice, a method of approaching analysands, and in the case of melancholics and depressives, it would only serve to elaborate a structure already in place, a failure of the father in the Oedipal stage.

The importance of repression and the father function leads us back to Leader's original formulation of footnotes, and the relationship between text and footnote. It would seem that Leader's affirmation of footnotes, his emphasis on whole theories as footnotes, reverses the power dynamic, the strata between text proper and footnotes as marginalia. Incorporating what he explores in this chapter on Klein's theories of infantile depression and Lacan's mirror stage theory, it becomes possible to see how Leader's agenda may be to provoke anxiety, a resistance in the footnotes against the text proper. Provoking anxiety can lead to a productive reading strategy, though, as also already discussed, the resulting reading can perform psychoanalysis's own compulsion to explain at all costs.

Ultimately, though, Leader's chapter falls short of itself. Leader's "side-by-side" reading – although foot-notational– is a strategy that seems suspiciously like Klein's own style of employing symbolic equations instead of seeking to create symbolization. Leader is unclear on what is produced by bringing Klein and Lacan into close proximity, does little more than show they agree on several issues and, ultimately, that Klein succeeded in the clinical setting despite her intentions.[56] The foot-notational text, at least for this reader, is not as productive a reading as it could have been. As Fink points out about symbolization, " a strata of elements would make more sense of the material"(225). In the end, it seems Geryon, too, had to create a strata of symbolization, where he had to give up the "autobiography" as a mediating force which he put first and subjugate it to his own life well-lived and a new mythology that could only be created through that new strata.

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[56] Leader does not take the time to contrast Klein's dirty analytical hands with Lacan's relatively and suspiciously clean ones. If Klein forces a drama, then we see Lacan in most instances removing the analysand and himself from it entirely. Perhaps a fear of the transference (from both analysands and his followers) or perhaps a fear of his own counter-transference, by remaining not the subject presumed to know, he seems to want to remain beyond reproach. If the pervert is in search of the law, then Lacan's clean hands are the least productive strategy.

THE RIDICULOUS AND THE SUBLIME:
A FICTO-CRITICAL CONCLUSION

> The shape and detail of depression have gone through a thousand cartwheels, and the treatment of depression has alternated between the ridiculous and the sublime. (286)
>
> *The Noonday Demon*
>
> Andrew Solomon

> And in cooking, as in writing, you must please yourself to please others. Strangely, it can take enormous confidence to trust your own palate, follow your own instincts. (viii)
>
> *How to Eat*
>
> Nigella Lawson

Now jouissance is all good and fine, but you shouldn't have it with morning toast and it should not get in the way of a good shag. Reflection and the mode of concentration explored here and called melancholia are part of the creative process, an aspect required to derive some perspective on a work and its place in the world. Yet, out of balance it leads to dangerous excess, the existentialism of the white page, or leaps into volcanoes – inspiration is dangerous business.

The title of this dissertation could have easily been "In Defense of Melancholia." As all of us who believe in its pleasurable, generative and ontological aspects will attest, one's position must be in defense against all the sorts of moralizing, overmedicating, and homogenizing forces that are fearful of its implications. Yet, I hope three hundred some odd pages of defence and exploration have provided the grounds on which to talk about ways to find a balance in the universe. I am not concerned with prevention, nor cures, nor antibodies, nor treatment. What I am interested in is the fullness of experience as a prevention against depression's most abject states. A life of reflection, yes, but married with an engagement with the moment, the presence of things as well.

* * *

Kristjana and I hung out in a cabin by the sea. No one came to bother we. She made jam and I made lamb and she went sad eventually. It was not my fault. And it was not hers. Questions fell all cherry blossoms from the trees and gravity was heavier there. At night she slept and I lay awake, closeness gnawing away in the crawl space and through the small window I could see the stars slowly turning around the singular comfort of distance. She'll understand why I am leaving. She and the jam will smile when I get back.

I was lucky enough to meet Geryon on the bus last week, and much to my surprise he has not given up photography. "You're confusing subject with object," he said and smirked a little, blushing a darker red at the memory of that line. It all comes down to that "skin of mutual pressures," the fine balance between reflection and active presence. "Did you really fly over the volcano?" I asked as the bus hit a bump. "Weren't you listening?" he replied. I shook my head trying to make it quiet. "Isobel will tell you. You have to listen," he said, something stirring over his shoulder.

But how to listen in this confusion of the senses that is melancholia? Geryon hears flowers. Kristjana is almost drowned in a deluge of sensory excess and in Audrey's world everything symbolizes something to the point that nothing is signified in the end. The melancholic is autistic, at sea in a sensory world they cannot control or define. How extraordinary perfect and terrifying.

The melancholic's repetitions come down to this. Say something anymore than three times and the mind gives up on it, abandons it – the law of diminishing return. Repetition is left for the body to pick over, and it all comes back to the body. Repetition looks like rhythm to the body, and rhythm makes sense. In therapy my therapist suggests a therapy she thinks might be therapeutic. EMDR (www.emdr.org). Through rapid light repetition or repetitive tapping on the knees or hands, the patient circles emotions, trying to trigger some association or memory. Not that different than Freud's method of laying hands on his patients (though less creepy). The body remembers too. Isobel knows this. That's why I had to go and find her.

I traveled to meet Isobel, passed through pocked and sparse villages always speaking her name and a few times it came back to me. She no longer exists the way we understand existing, this clumsy collection of reminders. Maybe she is a world class tribal dancer, or a show girl with rosy cheeks and a penchant for chocolate covered cherries. The rhythm did get her. Regardless, her story carries out to the horizon, looks flat to some and only the measured distance between earth and sky to others. She has become pure story, not a bad thing to be. Because story can become mythology if told right, with the right pauses and breaths.

All three of these kind people seeking to reconcile the inner lives with the outside world using careful wooden blocks, tomatoes, glue, jam jars, the horizon, and sometimes words. Kristjana taught me that laughter has a different kind of distance, the distance of a body that rides a carousel and is nothing in that moment more than the laugh. And she taught me that home is all the mistakes loved for themselves. "It's not forgetting or remembering," Isobel told me, "it's both and neither, when the rhythm takes you." It's the singular thought that you are no more than that moment, and you don't have to be anything more. Geryon taught me the value of red and wings and all things hidden from the Other. His last photograph a picture of what *he* wanted, and a register of colour and skin, and limbs unfurled for once in air.

* * *

In her cookbook *How to Eat* (a title that made the clerk look at me like I was dumber than a bag of hammers), Nigella Lawson makes a simple suggestion that I have used as an epigraph to this conclusion: "in cooking, as in writing, you must please yourself to please others" (viii). Now I am not suggesting that food is love. For all three of my friends, what recurred was the body trying to insist itself as presence, trying to breathe, trying to feel pleasure, trying to eke out an existence under the weight of a self-conscious faculty. Just as laughter pulls us into the moment, the body, its appetites, its pleasures, its own determined intuition and desires can pull us to pleasure. And pleasure is the obstacle to jouissance. And sometimes, particularly here, it is an end in itself.

The other side of eating is cooking, acting with intuition based on an appetite, acting on the moment. Nigella tells me "Strangely it can take enormous confidence to trust your own palate, follow your own instincts" (viii). Not just the moment of paprika on a bottom lip, but the ability to move past the moment, to make an occasional choice on the certainty of paprika without ambivalence. Although, with food it seems easier to have a backup plan (just order out for pizza). With life and language there rarely seems to be this luxury.

That's risk: "without habit, which itself is just trial and error, this can be harder than following the most elaborate of recipes" (viii). Risk becomes less riskier with habit. I start inviting my three friends over for Sunday cooking, a meal I will plan not for its heart breaking agony and arduous toil, but for its taste and the pleasure that it affords in the mucking about. Kristjana will bring desert, Isobel will bring music, and Geryon the perfect beverage (always papaya juice so we can eat the sun). Each week I will cook one thing I am sure of, certain I can make okay, and one thing unknown. That's a less risky risk.

Risk is the chance to play, do be involved in the doing. To act out of the safety and to seek out the possibility of what Julia K. is always rambling on about: "experience."[57] Certainly therapy would be risky, when I think about it, but it is the realm of self-reflection *ad nauseum*. Therapy should never be taken seriously without a corresponding healthy dose of chocolate and a bit of dancing if available.[58]

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[57] Each person's play is as singular as each person's appetite. Last year, I decided I need to play. I held bad art parties, where friends could come and make hideous things (if it got too pretty you had to make it ugly) and try to subvert their own perfectionism. I bought an excessive amount of lego and built things. I played video games. I took up hockey. I hated the things I made at the party, got muscle cramps from lying on the floor for hours on end while assembling lego, almost lost my thumbs to Nintendo, and suffered a litany of injuries at the hands of some very big fast skating men. But play took me out of the moment, made me complete something, and despite myself made me have fun.

[58] After years of couples counseling and individual therapy, I happened upon the perfect counselor. Never before have I felt so listened to. My only request: I am sick of knowing my story. I know my story. I want something to do about it now. Why did I not know before her the possibility of rewriting the story. Though I am sure I did in some way know the importance of rewrites, the work I did with her was different because she was the perfect reader, the perfect witness to what was done. In such a context, the rewritten story becomes more real, a new mythology of myself.

And most of all, Kristjana says, sometimes we need to listen to Robert Burton: "Be not solitary, be not idle" (432). We each have the certainty of our own company for the rest of our days. Sometimes people are the risk, the play, the dance. In writing, in telling their story, each of my three friends have made it possible to have company in such isolation. Barthes writes that the lover's discourse is

> [i]gnored, disparaged, or derided by [the surrounding languages], severed not only from authority (sciences, techniques, arts). Once a discourse is thus driven by its own momentum into the backwater of the "unreal," exiled from all gregarity, it has no recourse but to become the site, however exiguous, of an *affirmation*. (1)

Each writing, hopefully even this one, is a writing in defense of melancholia and an affirmation of its discourse. "Mistakes and all," says Kristjana. "Mistakes most of all," adds Isobel.

And at the end of the night, the certainty of dishes drying drip by drip, the quiet smile of belly full. Begun, worked through and completed in one day. Most of the time writing is never finished, just abandoned. We must know our world and find our version of the "thin skin of mutual pressures."

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